THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War 50¢

Vol. 24 Annual

On Lifting the Trade Embargo Against Vietnam

by the Clarence Fitch Chapter of VVAW

We believe that the United States war in Indochina was a turning point in American history. We believe that the conduct of that war exposed to us and to the American people the contradictions and hypocrisies which lie at the very foundations of American foreign and domestic policies. We believe that the failure to understand and clarify these true lessons of the American experience in Indochina continues to fester in the American body politic. This failure has led directly to such dishonorable and disgraceful episodes and activities as: an embargo which punished the Vietnamese people for successfully defending their homeland, and which prohibited American scientists and veterans from studying the health effects of exposure to herbicides which afflict so many of our own brothers and sisters; our government's political and military support for the genocidal Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; the long cruel hoax on the families of the Americans missing in action played by our government and by unscrupulous POW activists. This failure has contributed indirectly to both covert and open U.S. intervention in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, and contributes even now to American policy in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia.

We believe that our failure as a nation to come to terms with the American experience in Indochina is a contributing factor in the continuing isolation and alienation of Vietnam veterans. We believe that this alienation represents a failure to reconcile ourselves to the country which enlisted and drafted us, to the people we tried to destroy, and to our own experiences. We believe that one part of this reconciliation process requires that we recognize, understand, help heal and rebuild, and finally forgive the people who became our enemies by fighting for their independence.

We welcome the end of the embargo. We support the complete normalization of relations between our government and the countries of Indochina. We urge generosity in aid for reconstruction, especially funding and logistical support to clean up the deadly artifacts of war we left behind, which even now maim and kill Vietnamese, some not even conceived when we left Saigon nearly twenty years ago.

We hope that by all this and more we can begin to complete the process of reconcilliation. We have already spent half our lives on this journey, and we have a long way to go.

Healing the Wounds of War

The following article was written by Steven Stratford, the Executive Director of the Veterans Viet Nam Restoration Project. He is a Viet Nam veteran and a member of VVAW. In this article Steven relates his experience of returning to Viet Nam as a member of VVRP Team IV. In March, 1992, the members of Team IV spent four weeks at Xuan Hiep building a health clinic alongside the Vietnamese. Xuan Hiep is a tiny village which lies along Highway 1, 85 miles northeast of Ho Chi Minh City.

Since 1989, the VVRP has sent eight teams of Americans—almost all whom are Viet Nam Veterans—to northern and southern Viet Nam. Team members, who spend four weeks in country, deliver medical supplies and work with the Vietnamese, many of whom are also veterans, to build health clinics and other socially beneficial facilities. By participating in these projects, team members are healing themselves while reconciling for all Americans with the Vietnamese people. When the projects are finished and donated to the local community, team members tour Viet Nam visiting the places where they served.

In early February at a place in Sebastopol, California called Magic Mountain, the members of VVRP

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Danny with our guide paying tribute at the My Lai Memorial. Each of us expressed our condolences in our own way.

Clinton and Veterans

On the surface the Department of Veterans Affairs is doing well—$1.3 billion more representing a 3.6% increase.

More that 10 million veterans are in their seventies, yet only 5 new nursing homes will open.

Persian Gulf Syndrome is already claiming more that 10,000 victims. Agent Orange has not gone away and atomic vets are only now getting their due. Yet, only 27,000 more veterans will be able to be treated in the hospital system. Only one new hospital and one outpatient clinic are to open. To conserve funds Vietnam Vets are being placed in civilian convalescent homes to die.

Forty percent of the homeless are Vietnam Veterans. We came from the low classes and oppressed minorities, were hired later than our peers and fired first.

123,000 Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since returning home—twice the number that died in combat in Vietnam. With the highest rate of suicide, alcohol addiction and divorce, expanded social programs geared to the particular problems of vets are essential.

Despite a nice speech about veterans, Clinton's policy is not much different from that of George Bush.

Homeless Vets

Vets constitute more than 40% of the homeless population in the U.S. VVAW members across the country have participated in "standdowns" organized by the VA and assorted vets groups. ID card are made, medical care provided, and psychiatric counseling, food and shelter are provided for 2-3 days.

After all, these are our comrades, our friends. Most of us are really only 2 or 3 steps from their economic situation. Given the circumstances we could be on the street.

But what about the other 363 days of the year? Where is the government that so eagerly sent us off to war? The VA and other government agencies must to more!

Thousands of homes are repossessed from vets every year— boarded up, and left empty. Open them up. Money can be found for SROs and public housing, as well. We need a comprehensive program of training, jobs and housing—not monuments, publicity shots and patriotic speeches!

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FRAGGIN'

Bill Shunas

When I was drafted back in 1967, I appealed on the grounds that I had a bad knee. That kept me out of the Army for about a year. But, eventually the draft board called be back. "Squat," they said. I squatted. "Go to the next station," they said. I went to the next station. About ten hours later I was getting my head shaved in a barber shop in Fort Leonard Wood.

I didn't pursue my efforts to get out of the Army too hard because I thought it was cool to stop the red horde in Vietnam. I didn't want to get shot at, but what the hell, someone had to do it. I did my time. I served honorably and all that crap that means a lot to civilian warmakers and Vietnam Veterans who look back through the dim light of history and declare that the war was good.

By the time I finished my tour in Vietnam, I felt stupid. Them anti-war protesters had been right. I can't find fault with someone like Bill Clinton for finding the way to keep out of the draft. While I was stupid, Clinton was smart. And he did it honorably too. Me, and hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of others didn't want to go because we wanted to live long enough to lose our hair and develop arthritis. I say that Clinton acted honorably back them because his actions suggested more than a simple matter of saving his own skin like the rest of us. He protested and led protests against a war he believed wrong and which was wrong.

To oppose a war does not necessarily mean that you oppose the soldier in that war. It should mean that you oppose the politicians who start and continue the war and maybe the conduct of the general staff which carries out the war. It is not mutually exclusive that a person such as Clinton could have opposed the Vietnam War and still have feelings of empathy for veterans of that war, respect for the war's dead and sorrow for families of the dead. It was perfectly appropriate that he pay his respects at The Wall last Memorial Day. Yes, there was a problem that the wealthy and well-educated got out of Vietnam, but that's another issue. It was right that Clinton, the man, and Clinton the President, should pay his respects. Those who booed him at the Wall showed disrespect for the dead and are guilty of the political opportunism of which they accuse him.

Now that I've spent four paragraphs defending a sitting President, It's time that I do an about face. From my observations of Bill Clinton's first year as President, his opposition to the Vietnam War two decades ago could have been the last honorable thing he did.

Back then I was stupid, Clinton was smart. But time marches on, and now there's been a role reversal. Where does one begin in analyzing Clinton's first year as President? How about the wishy-washy way he defends the appointments he makes when they face Senate approval? Or how about the way he caves in on the election promises he made when he faces opposition from Washington's power brokers? Or how about the way he sold out the poor and working people with the North American Free Trade Agreement? Maybe his opponents were right. He would have served in the Military. If it didn't kill him, it might have given him the backbone to fight for some of those good programs he promised to implement.

"Its the economy, stupid." That was supposed to be Clinton's campaign strategy when he ran for President. Now, after a year, we can see where his policies are headed. And guess what? It's the economy, stupid. Mr. Wishy-Washy was afraid of the third party twit, so he attacked the deficit. The "attack the deficit" people have turned their policy into the religion of the 90's. Clinton goes right along with them. These are the people who are coming up with new and innovative ways to squeeze the poor and the middle class.

They now have some vague theory (or sales pitch) that eliminating the deficit will lead to lower interest rates which will mean that the wealthy will start investing. In reality, the wealthy have never invested just because they had money. They invest when they think people will buy something. People aren't going to buy anything unless they have the money.

Therefore, the only hope for this sinking ship is to use government money to stimulate the economy and put more money in the hands of the poor, so they can buy things. While we are waiting for the economy to pick up from this increased consumer spending, a lot of people can start having a decent life.

Speak of humane. The President who humanely opposed the war in Vietnam sent twenty-three cruise missiles into downtown Baghdad. Of course, the missiles were super accurate and very 'smart'. Do you think Bill, who is also supposed to be very 'smart' thought they were intelligent enough to avoid civilians? Maybe it was worth it to him anyway. Clinton's low popularity in the polls immediately rose eleven per-cent. Now maybe he won't be booed the next time he visits The Wall. Things change a lot in twenty years, don't they?

Bill Somalia

JESS JESPERSON
MIDWEST COORDINATOR

Once again American troops are being killed. Once again our government is not prepared to support these troops properly. Once again the largesse of the U.S. military has evaporated from providing emergency food aid, medical supplies, and protection for its own troops and civilians so dependent on someone's protection.

Once again, we have involved our troops without giving them the leadership necessary to properly defend themselves. A relief operation has now turned to war. Americas have no business in another country's internal affairs. Like Vietnam, we are fighting the wrong war for the wrong people at the wrong time for the wrong reasons.

There is the issue of national strategic importance here. The presence of off-shore oil has been known for decades. Is our military doing the dirty work for the oil companies again? What better place to build a naval port. From Somalia, we're poised so much closer to the "hot spots" of Iraq and Iran. Controlling the Straits of Hormuz will certainly be easier as u.S. military presence increases.

Our government has not learned a damn thing from previous conflicts. Our operations against Iraq resulted in casualties, mostly from "friendly fire". Saddam is still in power, and hell bent on destroying the Kurdish population. Did I forget to mention that we supplied Iraq in its war with Iran? The wise men in Washington also supplied war materials to Iran back when they had a Shah. Then there was Reagan supplying arms to Khomeini.

Before the last election, people wondered if Bill Clinton's lack of foreign policy experience would hurt him. Ask the relatives of those killed in Somalia if it hurt them. Ask the people of Haiti if it has hurt. Bill's lack of experience hasn't bothered him at all. He's not being shot at by friendly troops who made a mistake. He hasn't been shot down and captured. You didn't see his dead body being dragged through the streets and mutilated by angry civilians.

Chickenhawk II Published

Dave Curry

National Staff

Fans of Robert Mason's *Chickenhawk*, the best-selling book that was one of the most engrossing and sensitive personal histories of service in the Vietnam War can take heart. After publishing an acclaimed science fiction book weapon, Mason earlier this year released *Chickenhawk: Back in the World*. The sequel is every bit as insightful as the original and perhaps provokes more controversy. Mason is extremely candid in describing his own chaotic response to post-Vietnam military and civilian life. His writing talent did not spare Mason his struggles to adjust to steady employment and deal with the lure of substance abuse. The first-hand accounts of arrest and incarceration are particularly instructive, providing rare insight into the link between the Vietnam and prison experience.

Impeach Nixon

BEN CHITTY
EAST COAST COORDINATOR

The good you do, they say, dies with you, the evil lives on long after you're gone. So it is with Richard Nixon. Just one example, maybe not even the most important.

1971—After more than two years in office, President Nixon's quest for "peace with honor" has killed thousands of Americans (mostly young) and hundreds of thousands of Indochinese (mostly civilians). The meatgrinder won't stop—whatever we do, whoever we talk to, however we act. Petitions, lobbying, vigils, marching, nonviolent civil disobedience, violent obstruction, political terrorism—nothing matters.

We find it hard to believe, hard to face, hard to sleep. We sit down in small groups and talk about it. We listen to each other and try to work out what it means, to us, to our families, to our country. We call them "rap groups"—you might say "group therapy," or "readjustment counselling," a kind of self-medication.

The Veterans Administration takes notice. March 1971, Veterans Administrator Donald Johnson writes to Charles Colson, Nixon's liaison on veterans affairs: "Vietnam veterans tend to see their experiences as an exercise in survival rather than a defense of national values. The majority, given the opportunity in company of their peers, express both intense anger and much guilt." He recommends expanding a pilot program which provides counselling for returning veterans.

Bad timing. Nixon's been watching us on television—VVAW, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, now "his" war. In April a thousand of us camp out in Washington, defy a court order, and march to the steps of the Capitol to throw our medals back at Congress. Middle America, the Silent Majority, our fathers and mothers, families and friends, look on us and wonder, and shudder, and weep. Nixon directs the VA to suspend all readjustment programs for returning veterans.

And worse people. Charles Colson has already asked the Internal Revenue Service to revoke VVAW's tax-exempt status as a veterans organization, and has set up the rival "Veterans for a Just Peace" (total membership maybe eight). Assigned to direct the Presidential effort to disrupt and subvert the Democratic opposition, he goes on to glory in the Watergate affair. (In fact, during the cover-up's early days, Nixon's concern about VVAW's threat to national security is used to justify the White House special intelligence unit's "investigation" of the McGovern campaign's tiles to violent radicals.)

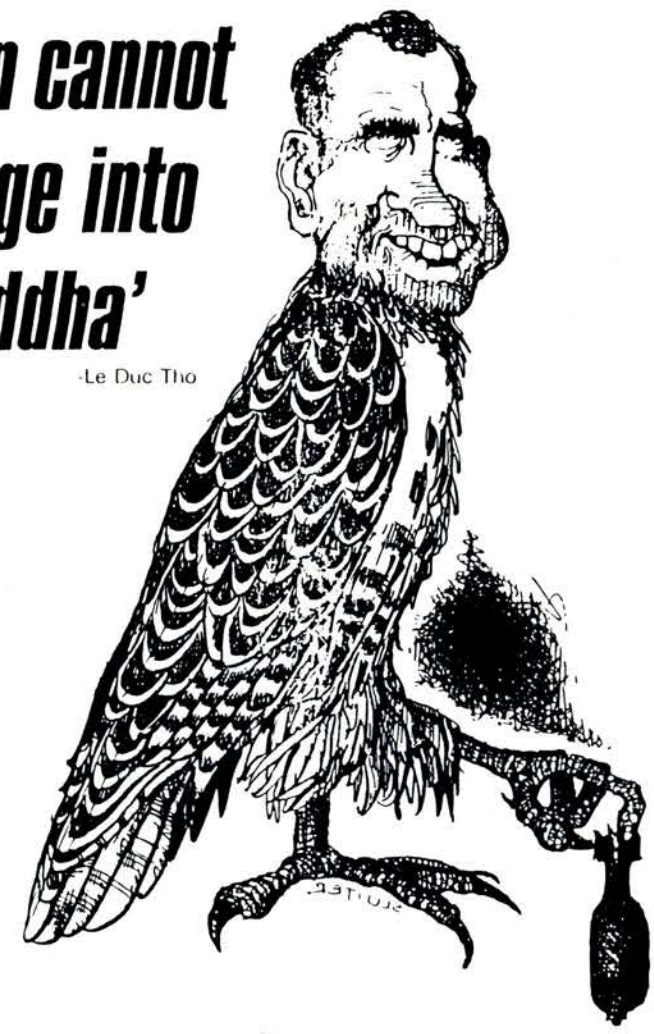
Colson orders the infiltration of certain radical groups—VVAW, the Black Panther Party, other notorious subversives—to provoke violence which can then be tied to the Democratic presidential campaign. Contingency planning includes declaring a national emergency and suspending the election. July 1972, the government subpoenas much of VVAW's leadership in Tallahassee, Florida, finally indicting us for conspiracy to attack the August Republican convention in Miami. With crossbows and slingshots. (All the defendants—minus the government informants exposed during the trial—are acquitted the next year in Gainesville, after about an hour's deliberation by the jury.)

VVAW is only a sideshow in that operation, but that's the operation which finally brings Nixon down. Of course Nixon doesn't resign because he conspired to subvert the Constitution, just because he lied about it. (And Colson's convicted of perjury, not treason.)

Nixon lived long enough to see another imperial President subvert the Constitution and get away with it. He also lived long enough to see his spite against Vietnam vets turn into fool's gold. The same imperial President demanded a better ending to the Vietnam story, and Hollywood rewrote the script on commission. Suddenly we discovered it had not been our country, our government, our Commander-in-Chief who betrayed us: it was—the peace movement! We all felt to bad about how the peaceniks disrespected Vietnam veterans we rushed out and bought yellow ribbons for the guys and gals in the Gulf.

Now Nixon's gone, laid to rest, praised by friend and foe alike. I'm wondering if it's too late to impeach him. Call me crazy.

Ben Chitty served in the U.S. Navy 1965-9, deployed twice to Vietnam, and is Co-Coordinator of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War in the New York metropolitan area.



The Last Word

" 'May he rest in peace,' a [Vietnamese] Foreign Ministry spokesman said, giving [his] government's official one-sentence reaction to Nixon's death. He declined to elaborate."

—from a Reuter dispatch

Bombs Over Baghdad

Dave Kettenhofen
NATIONAL COORDINATOR

It seems Bill Clinton has found some temporary relief from all the flak showering down upon him. He dished out some flak of his own by firing missiles into the heart of Baghdad, skyrocketing his presidential approval rating by eleven points. What a coup! This cowardly, political act has pacified his right-wing attackers while not greatly offending most of his supporters.

Never mind the collateral damage - those bodies pulled from the rubble were only dark skinned Muslims, much akin to the commies of old. Killing commies and people of color is a well accepted practice in this country. After all, the only countries the U.S. has attacked since World War II were those of color making moves toward self-sufficiency and threatening the status quo.

Clinton, seeking to bolster his newfound popularity, followed up the Baghdad attack with some loud saber rattling in North Korea, home of those despicable commies from way back. Might just as well stick to the easy road, eh Bill? While President Clinton continues to beat up age-old enemies, he is mired in the hotbeds of Bosnia, Cambodia, and Somalia. He is indecisive and seems to have no coherent policy for the Bosnian situation as it festers on. His failure to put pressure on China for its support of the Khymer Rouge may very well draw Vietnam into another war in Cambodia. And the killing goes on in Somalia.

I'm getting tired of the liberals and so-called progressives telling me to keep quiet and give Clinton a chance. I'm tired of innocent people dying for the sake of his presidency. Sure, I voted for him, but he has backpeddled and caved in on so many issues that I find it hard to have respect for him anymore. Clinton seems more concerned with image and building for another four years than with having the guts to fight for what is right. He is alienating the grassroots people who got him elected. It would be much more admirable for him to go down fighting in four years than to be a mediocre sellout for eight. He is no savior of the people by any means. We have to rely upon ourselves to get this country moving in the right direction, not some self-serving politician.

Vietnam's Health Crisis and Peace Village Medical Clinic

by Sally Swope

Vietnam's health problems are almost overwhelming. Most health care providers lack even basic running water in treatment rooms. Lab testing is rudimentary at best. Surgical and anesthesia equipment is antiquated and in short supply, and intensive care units as we know them are virtually nonexistent. Dentistry and preventive medicine are rarely practiced.

Dr. Peter Singer, an endocrinologist in the Department of Medicine at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, also serves as President of the Board for East Meets West Foundation based in Oakland. He returned to Vietnam in 1991 after a hiatus of 24 years.

Dr. Singer explained, "When I was in Danang between 1966 and 1967, I worked in the same hospital as the one I recently visited, and I saw absolutely no improvement—perhaps even further deteriorations."

"In 1990, the Vietnamese government's health budget was $67 million, approximately $1 per person. Contrast with health expenditures in excess of $2,500 for every man, woman and child in the United States."

Although health officials in Vietnam are aware of the complex problems, the country is so poor that they scarcely have the resources to tackle their health problems. The government no longer pays for primary care, deliveries, operations and aid to thousands of veterans with persistent problems due to injuries from recent wars with Cambodia, China and the U.S.

Many U.S. nonprofit organizations such as East Meet West Foundation (EMWF) in Oakland contribute significantly to improve the health status of the Vietnamese. EMWF makes a critical difference due to physicians and other professionals, who teach and work at Peace Village Medical Clinic in Danang.

Dr. John Murphy, an emergency room physician who practices at Marin General Hospital, worked for three months in Peace Village Medical Clinic last spring. "Physicians in Vietnam don't have high-tech medicine. They lack training, resources to make diagnoses, and technology to provide the best care."

"It's our goal to interrupt this cycle at as many points as possible with increased resources, better training through cultural exchanges and with more volunteer medical personnel in Danang. We hope that Peace Village Medical Clinic will play a major role in this training process for years to come."

Beside training physicians, other critical problems are related to communicable diseases and nutritional deficiencies such as iodine deficiency in mountainous areas that leads to cretinism and mental retardations.

Although the government's efforts to control infectious disease has decreased infant mortality, many infectious diseases that are easily treated in the U.S. often go undertreated or unrecognized. Another medical volunteer in Peace Village Medical Clinic for three months, Linda Meier, is a nurse practitioner at San Francisco State University.

She explained, "Many children were insufficiently immunized or not at all, and they developed polio. Yet the government exaggerated the statistics about who was immunized, which prevented a more effective public health programs from being implemented."

Also there is a mounting incidence of AIDS in Vietnam. CARE recently published a report on sexual attitudes of adult men about transmitting AIDS and the results portends a potential nightmare.

"Vietnam is drowning in children," added Debra Burke, who directs EMWF's overseas programs for its first years and holds a masters in public health.

"Soon 50% of the entire population will be younger than 15. While there is a two-child family policy, only educated urban families find family planning affordable and accessible."

Le Ly Hayslip cuts the ribbon to dedicate the Village of Hope

Unfortunately, 80% of the nation lives in rural areas where the primary methods of birth control are abortion and IUDs. To help the situation, EMWF recently added a gynecologist to the staff of peace Village Medical Clinic.

To highlight the shortage of supplies, Dr. Singer added, "A Vietnamese colleague pointed out that insulin was in such short supply that diabetic youngsters could die unless their parents could afford to buy insulin. This was hard to fathom—I'd never encountered this here."

Many patients told Ms. Meier abut a huge back market where Western medicines, especially American ones, sold at higher prices. "Often appropriate medicines were not available, in part due to cost. For many Vietnamese, the cost of a week's supply of penicillin is comparable to buying a new car."

In Vietnam, the health care issues are every bit as perplexing and complex as those we face at home, but the major difference is the limitation on care due to economic factors. Despite many drawbacks to practicing medicine in Vietnam, the system is not yet bogged down by high-price malpractice suits nor expensive insurance premiums. And in many clinics such as peace Village Medical Clinic, patients can choose both Western and Chinese medical treatments.

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Le Ly Hayslip Meets with VVAW

by Joe Miller,
NATIONAL STAFF

Last Veterans' Day, in Chicago, Vietnam vets from Wisconsin and Illinois had the opportunity to meet with Le Ly Haylsip, the author of two books about her life as a young peasant during the Vietnam war and her subsequent move to the U.S. in a search for peace. These books were the basis of Oiliver Stone's film, "Heaven and Earth," released last Christmas, but given short shrift by the critics and theater chains. The film is now out on video, and any vet who has not yet seen it should do so.

Hayslip's participation in VVAW's Veterans' Day ceremony last fall came about because a small, but dedicated, group of people from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana decided they would like to invite her to speak on campus. I was one of the participants in that group, and I raised the possibility of Le Ly being invited to speak on Vet's Day. Through phone conversations during the planning for the university event, Le Ly said she would be happy to speak to VVAW in Chicago.

When the day arrived, we were all pleasantly surprised at how cooperative the weather was—for Chicago in November. While it was chilly, the skies were bright blue. An enthusiastic crowd huddled around the ceremony site, awaiting the arrival of our guest speaker. Le Ly had been met at the airport by three university students, who then drove her to the spot. When her turn on the speakers' list came up, Le Ly stepped to the microphone, and in her quiet voice, spoke powerfully of the search for peace for all veterans of the Vietnam war, Americans, Vietnamese and others. She spoke of reconciliation between Vietnam and the United States, for a final end to the war.

All of us were deeply moved by her words, and she received warm, prolonged applause as she stepped away from the podium. After the ceremony, Le Ly decided to join us at Annie and Joel's for the traditional post-event gathering. She visited with us there for an hour or so. Annie presented Le Ly with some VVAW souvenirs, we all said our good-byes, then Le Ly and the students headed for Champaign-Urbana. This was one of the most moving of Veterans' Day ceremonies, since many of us began to feel a greater sense of why we had opposed the war as veterans and how to reconnect with the Vietnamese as people through individuals like Le Ly Hayslip.

For those who wish to contribute to Le Ly's efforts to heal the wounds of Vietnam for the people of Vietnam, you should send donations to: Le Ly Hayslip, Director, East Meets West Foundation, 725 Washington Street, #310, Oakland, CA 94607.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES,

VIETNAMESE BEER COMING

HANOI, Vietnam—U.S. drinkers will soon be able to get a taste of Vietnamese beer without traveling overseas. The Hue Brewery has dispatched Vietnam's first container cargo of Hue Beer to New York, three months after the end of a 30-year U.S. trade embargo against Hanoi, a spokesman for the brewery said Tuesday.

RIGHT TO STRIKE IN VIETNAM

HANOI, Vietnam—Workers in communist Vietnam now have the right to strike. The National Assembly overwhelmingly passed Vietnam's first labor code, which seeks to balance workers' rights with the interests of foreign investors in an economy whose state controls have been loosened, the state-run Vietnam News reported Monday.

COFFEE FROM VIETNAM

HANOI - Americans familiar with Vietnam's Central Highlands as a wartime battleground could soon be drinking coffee from the mountains' misty slopes now that trade ties are growing. A first shipment of 54 metric tons of coffee from Dac Lac province has been sent to the United States to open up a new market, the official newspaper Lao Dong reported Tuesday.

Filipino Amerasian Children of United States Military Basic Facts

Who are the Amerasian Children?

For nearly 50 years, the largest US military bases outside US territory were to be found in the Philippines. The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo led to the closing of Clark Air Base in 1991. the rejection by the Philippine Senate in September 1991 of a new Bases Treaty led to the closure of Subic Naval Base in November 1992.

Countless children were born of the contract between US servicemen and the women of local communities. The servicemen were from the bases, those in transit and the countless others—particularly during the Vietnam and Gulf wars—who had R&R shore leaves.

These children, sired and then abandoned by US military personnel, are the Amerasian children. In a majority of cases they are being raised by their mothers. In other cases extended family members are the care-givers.

Under what conditions are the Amerasian children living?

These are children living in conditions of extreme poverty which result in poor housing conditions, inadequate nutrition, interrupted schooling, and lack of medical care. As children of sexually exploited and marginalized Filipina mothers, the children themselves suffer discrimination and the risk of exploitation.

Why is the issue coming up now?

With the closing of the bases, the women have lost even the meager livelihood that working in the bars provided.

The Philippine government's economic plans for conversion of the former bases include the possible creation of commercial and industrial complexes. Nowhere has provision been made for the training of women, their employment or their participation in economic development. The "entertainment" business was the main economic activity of Olongapo and generated enough annual income for Olongapo to gain city status in 1966.

The women's contribution to the relative wealth of Olongapo has been considerable, yet these very women are being totally overlooked and not being offered the alternative livelihood that they desperately need.

With no current sources of income, and no employment prospects, the mothers are extremely concerned about the situation of their children.

Is US citizenship for Amerasian children the answer?

There are some moves to press for an amendment to include the Philippines in the 1982 law granting citizenship to American children from South Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

The mothers of Amerasian children feel that the citizenship option should be open to their children, particularly when they reach young adulthood. But for now the concerned population feels that:

1. As few children have documentary evidence of US paternity, most would not qualify for citizenship, and would continue to be raised in the Philippines.

2. For the few mothers who were able to obtain required documentation, their low educational level, no marketable skills, and lack of family or community support network would make integration into the US extremely difficult.

3. In many cases, the mothers have other children by Filipino husbands or partners. The mothers are apprehensive about leaving behind Filipino children or the difficulty of trying to raise larger families in the US.

What is the class action suit?

In November 1992, a San Francisco law firm, Cotchett, Illston & Pitre, approached Philippine organizations to propose filing a class action suit on behalf of Filipino Amerasian children.

The suit seeks to obtain medical and educational benefits averaging $8000 per child until 18 years of age, based on the implied contract between the US Navy and the women of Olongapo that provided health and education services to the women in exchange for their sexual labor for US servicemen. The lawsuit seeks to extend those benefits to the children born of those relationships.

What do the children and their mothers need?

Educational and medical funds are needed and will be welcome. However, the extreme poverty of this population makes limiting aid for the children to these two components inadequate. It may mean, for example, trying to ensure the children's education while their nutritional needs would continue to be unprovided for.

The children's basic needs include food, clothing, shelter, schooling, medical needs, and recreation. There are also special needs such as counselling and day care.

How can interested parties contribute to this campaign?

1. Monitoring developments in the class action suit. For more information contact the law firm, through Don West, Cotchett, Illston & Pitre, 840 Malcom Road, Suite 200, Burlingame, CA 94010 [Telephone: 415-697-6000; Fax: 415-697-2390];

2. Lobbying for the passage of legislation providing child support for Filipino Amerasians and other positive legislative initiatives;

3. Forming support groups;

4. Drumming up public awareness of this concern; and

5. Giving material support through donations and the like.

With the Vietnam War looming in the background and service in that war a question on the minds of young American males, Wilson and Hernigan embark on a two year journey in the Army. They come from different backgrounds—white suburbia and black inner city—but a friendship begins to develop when they meet in basic training. Sharing troubles, adventures and misadventures, they are a team.

Wilson and Jernigan do a tour of duty at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and a tour in Vietnam. They manage to get assignments together because they've learned to manipulate the Army bureaucracy. Like all other soldiers, their passage through these years is filled with the anguish of separation from civilian life, the boredom and subservience of Army life and whatever excitement they can manufacture. Along the way they encounter unique characters and polish their skills as wheeler-dealers.

In Vietnam, they at first enjoy the easy life of Saigon. Then the Tet Offensive happens and wraps them up in the war like everyone else. Now part of the war, their search for adventure sends them on a mission of their own choosing that changes everything in their lives.

Wilson and Jernigan

by Bill Shunas

"A must read for those interested in the Vietnam War. Shunas takes us to a side not seen in other novels."
—Barry Romo
National Coordinator of VVAW

Bill Shunas is a long-time activists in VVAW, writer of the "Fraggin' " column in *The Veteran* and editor a of union newpaper.

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Vietnam Then and Now

Exhibit by Vietnamese Combat Photographers Premiers in U.S.

Opening Reception: September 29 at 6:30 PM
Exhibit: Opens September 27 and continues for three weeks
Eye Gallery
1151 Mission Street
San Francisco

A rare and compelling exhibit of the works of 30 Vietnamese photographers will be in display for the first time in the United States at the Eye Gallery for three weeks starting on September 27.

The photos, which span the period from the Vietnam war until today, include war photos taken by combat photographers working in North Vietnam and with liberation forces in the South. Especially dramatic are the images of the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong.

To launch the exhibit, there will be an opening reception at the Eye Gallery, 1152 Mission Street, San Francisco on Thursday September 29 beginning at 6:30 PM , with a program at 7:30 PM. Three of the Vietnamese photographers, Nguyen Van Bao of Hanoi, Lam Tan Tai and Doan Duc Minh, both of Ho Chi Minh City, will be present at the reception.

The photos of contemporary Vietnam will also be on display at the Vietnam Trade Fair '94 at the Herbts Pavilion, Fort Mason Center from September 29 through October 1.

The photo exhibit is sponsored by the U.S. Vietnam Friendship Association with assistance and support from the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Commerce and Trade. For more information call the Eye Gallery at 415/431-69121.

SPONSORED BY U.S.-VIETNAM FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

☐ I cannot attend the premiere, please accept my contribution of $ _____ to help cover the cost of bringing this historic exhibit to the American people.

(Tax-deductible donations can be made to the EYE GALLERY and sent to US/VFA P.O. Box 460073, San Francisco, CA 94146.)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Reconciliation with Vietnam

Team IV began assembling. We came from all over the U.S. to meeting and develop ourselves into a cohesive team before undertaking our journey. We got to know one another, shared stories about our first trip to Viet nam and shared our motives for returning. We decided who would take care of which responsibilities and we packed the 1,200 pounds of medical supplies we would be delivering. In other words, we built a strong sense of community among ourselves and began to get in touch with the variety of emotions which had lead us there.

On February 21st, we were met by our hosts, the People Committee of Dong Nai Province, when we landed at Tan Son Nhut Airport. We were to have been transported to the village of Long Hai; or at least that's where we thought we were going. Instead we were taken to the Dong Nai Hotel in Dien Hoa. The VVRP had received permission from the Vietnamese government for Team IV to complete the construction of a partially built health clinic in Long Hia and that is what our U.S. Treasury License gave us permission to do. However, things had changed.

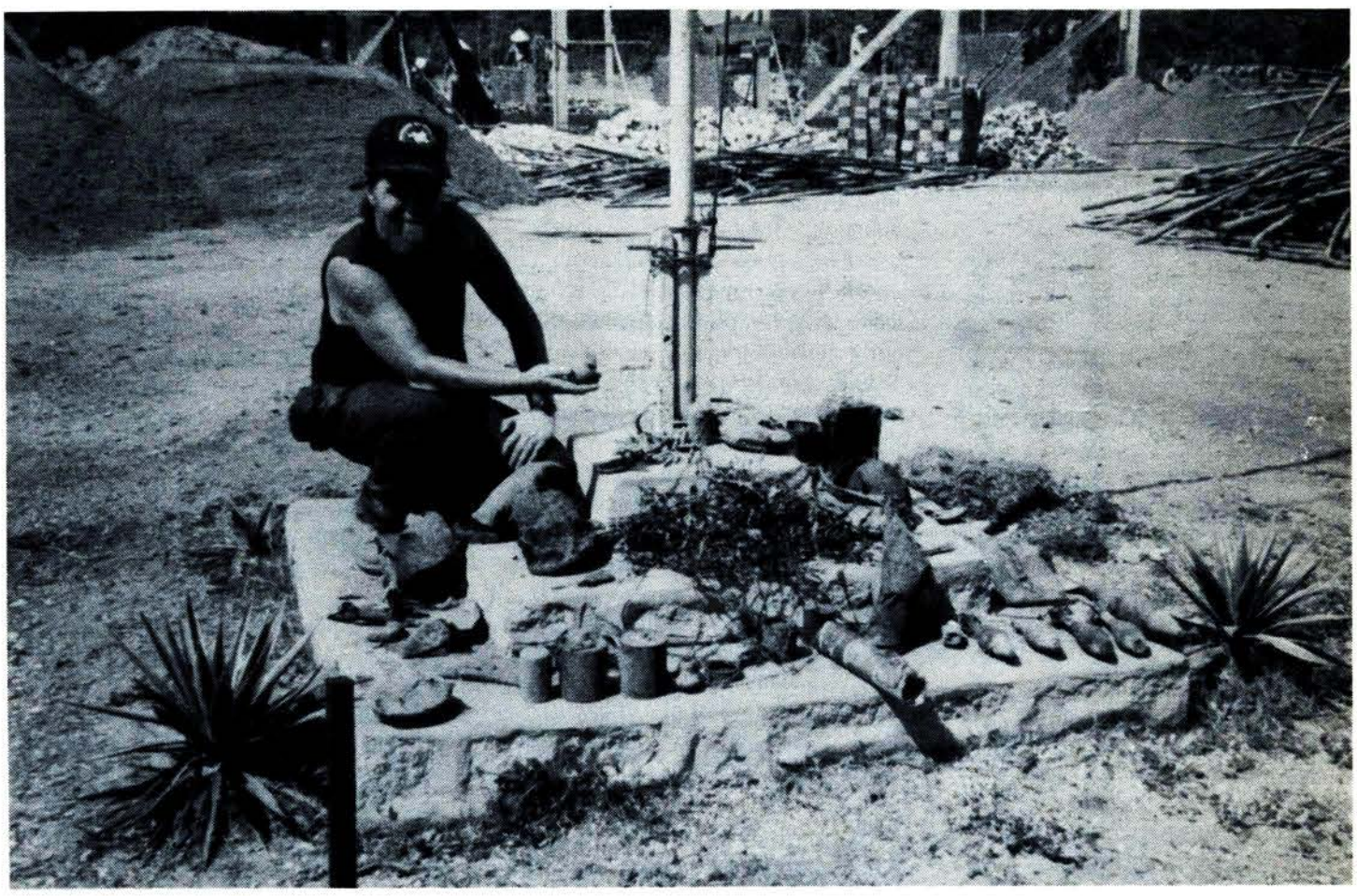
We were told that we were to meet with Mr. Binh, President of the Dong Nai Peoples Committee, three days later. At that meeting, we were informed that, due to recent redistricting, Long Hai was no longer a part of Dong Nai Province. Consequently, we could not build our fourth medical facility there. Instead, we were asked to build a new medical clinic, from the ground up, in a little village called Xuan Hiep.

First we requested an inspection of the new proposed site and surrounding area. We wanted to determine the need for a clinic at the proposed location. We also requested a visit to the original site so that we could see for ourselves that the people there understood the situation.

We decided that the need was even greater at the new site, but, we were concerned about not having enough money to build a completely new clinic and we were also concerned about whether we would have enough time to build it in the four weeks we had allotted to this project. However, after being assured that the local Peoples Committee would make up the difference should we run short of cash and that the construction would be done on time, we agreed to build the clinic where they asked us to. Two days later, construction was underway.

During the construction period of our stay in Viet Nam, the Peoples committee supplied us with housing; and oh what housing it was! We were put up at the Hoa Binh (Peace) Hotel, at K-4 Park, near Long Khanh. The Hoa Binh Hotel is unbelievably beautiful. It's a huge hotel that was built shortly after *The Liberation*. It was a place for Vietnamese Officers to *retreat* after the War.

The three story hotel is surrounded by a moat and surrounding the moat is an unbelievably beautiful park. All the roads and ponds are bordered by hand-cut stone walls. The second and third stories of the Hotel each have sweeping verandas and the grounds around the hotel are covered with beautiful flowers and plants.



Steven holding the hand-grenade the little Vietnamese girl gave him.

We had expected to be housed in mud or grass huts, so you can imagine our surprise when we were shown our accommodations. We even had running water and sporadic electricity. We were thrilled!

The job site was nine or ten miles north of the hotel on Highway 1. Every weekday morning at 6:30 a.m. a van would be out front to take us to work, and at 2:30 p.m. it would return us to our hotel, where we would spend most evenings sharing the day's activities with one another.

The day before we began clearing the land to build the clinic, the Vietnamese burned all of the weeds off the site. In the process two land mines exploded. After the weeds were burned off, a bulldozer that looked as though it might have been used during the U.S. Civil War, scraped the ground clean. What it began to uncover was shocking to say the least.

The first little jewel the dozer scraped up was a live U.S. mortar round. Before that day was over we had unearthed three more mortar rounds, and before the week was over, we had found numerous antipersonnel mines, antitank mines, hand-grenades, artillery rounds, rocket launchers, M-16 barrels, thousands of rounds of live M-16 ammo, ammo-cases, helmets, and GI boots—all military issue.

It only took the bulldozer a few days to clear the land. However, throughout this process the local children would chase along behind it trying to find anything uncovered that might be of value (scraps of metal, plastic or glass primarily). On Friday of the first week I was busy digging out the foundation footings, when a ten-year-old Vietnamese girl walked up and handed me a live U.S. hand-grenade—with a very rusty pin.

The locals saw that we were saving up all the ordinance we found at the foot of a flagpole on the site, so the little girl though she was helping us out by giving me the grenade. Needless to say, this was a powerful experience, especially when coupled with my experience of the following day.

On the weekends most of the Team would either go to Saigon or Vung Tau. That first weekend we went to Saigon. While in Saigon, a few of us went to the To Do Women's Hospital, a place I had visited in August 1991. This hospital has a whole room full of the preserved remains of hundreds of Agent Orange casualties (aborted deformed fetuses) and a wealth of statistics on the damage Agent Orange has caused the Vietnamese people. On this visit I discovered they had a new ward.

On this ward were about 20 children, all under the age of two. Every one of them had a leg, an arm, or both missing—or had their face severely damaged—as a direct result of the live ordinance the U.S. left behind. This scene, coupled with the memory of the little present the ten-year-old girl had given me the day before, had a devastating effect on me.

Most Americans don't realize that the U.S. is still killing and maiming innocent civilians 20 years after our troops came home. The millions of tons of munitions we left behind literally litter the countryside, and it is usually the little children who accidently discover them. You see, children tend to wander where adults don't. Their naiveté coupled with their budding curiosity makes for a dangerous combination in a booby trapped countryside.

Once the ground was all cleared, and the foundation laid, the walls of the clinic began going up rapidly. One week into construction the building began to take shape.

The foundation consisted of large hand cut granite blocks placed on a bed for fist sized granite gravel. On top of the foundation went the earthen brick walls.

Although most of the American vets on the Team had some construction experience, we were not accustomed to the Vietnamese methods of building. The Vietnamese provided the skilled craftsmen; we were the grunt labor.

In all, there were 13 VVRP Team Members on the job and 28 Vietnamese. Many of the Vietnamese workers were formerly our enemy, but as the days turned into weeks, they became our friends.

By the end of the second week on the job the roof was going up. Hardwood rafters were embedded into the brick walls and earthen brick tiles were placed on top of them.

Three weeks into construction, all that remained to be done was the finish work. Tiling the floor, installing electrical fixtures and glazing the windows didn't take long.

By the 23rd of March the clinic was complete. To christen in completed project, we planted a peace pole in front of the clinic.

The area where we lived and worked during the first month of our journey was a very volatile spot during the War. Neither side ever rally controlled this *free-fire zone*. Evidence of the War remains everywhere. Many of the buildings damaged during the war have never been repaired.

You couldn't take a stroll through the surrounding community without seeing many amputees struggling to eke out a living in this war torn district. Huge areas of the landscape are barren. To this day, virtually nothing will grow in these vast wastelands where we dumped our chemical weapons. Grossly deformed children attest to the fact that the dioxin has made its way up the food chain.

Twenty years later, craters still mark the spots where our bombs fell, but like most everything we left behind, they too are recycled: Now they are used for swimming holes, duck ponds or fish farms. The innovations and fortitude of the Vietnamese are nothing

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

short of amazing.

Upon completion of the Xuan Miep Medical Clinic, the Team split up. Many of us still had unfinished personal business to tend to, having to do with our war time experiences. A few Team Members chose to return home early, but most of us wished to return to the areas where we had served. For me, that meant returning to the heliport at Tan Son Nhut where my barracks once stood.

Ever since the War, the sound of helicopters overhead has caused me to reflect on the madness I had witnessed. At times, these refections consumed me and I would find myself reliving experiences that I had never learned to cope with.

I would see the mutilated bodies of those who happened to be near the coordinates I had reported to the F-4s. I would hear the death screams of children who happened to be caught in an ambush meant for me. I would smell that awful mixture of cordite and blood in the air after a bar I was in blew up.

Thanks to the veterans of the Ho Chi Minh City War Veterans Association, I was able to gain access to classified areas of this military installation. I was actually able to stand on the spot where my barracks once stood—only now there is no heliport there, no thump-thump-thumping to hear. Now there is nothing there but a vacant field and the sound of birds chirping.

The Marijuana Eradication Team (MET) helicopters that so often fly the skies of the Emerald Triangle where I live, no long cause me the extreme discomfort they once did. Now when I hear them, I reflect on a country (though still one of the poorest in the world) that is finally at peace.

My Lai

On March 28, 1971, I turned 21 in Viet Nam. That night my live-in Vietnamese fiance was killed when a bomb exploded at a bar in Saigon. Twenty-one years later I turned 42 in Viet Nam. That night I was in Nha Trang restlessly wondering how I would handle visiting the My Lai Monument the following morning. Nothing I had read or heard could have possibly prepared me for what I witnessed the following day.

Four other members of Team IV undertook the four hour drive to My Lai with me. Unlike the previous four or five days of our journey, there was very little conversation on the road that morning. As we approached the site of the massacre, I was overwhelmed with the beauty of the countryside. I simply could not imagine such an atrocity taking place in serene surroundings. It looked like paradise.

The rice paddies were all vibrant green. The paddy dikes all had mature palm trees and flowering vines growing along them. The air was clean and bright. The people on the roadside seemed so peaceful and content. This seemed to be the last place on earth such a thing could have happened. An almost violent silence fell upon us!

As we unloaded from our van and headed in different directions, no words were spoken. "How is it possible this peace could be violated in such a way?" echoed through my mind.

My Lai is not just one monument. My Lai was not just one village. The whole area is covered with monuments that attest to the 502 innocent civilians who lost their lives on that horrendous day. Statues of men, women and children caught, and frozen forever, into the positions they held as they drew their last breaths. The expressions on the faces of those statues capture the agony these people must have felt in their last moments of life.

On the wall in the foyer in the My Lai Museum is a plaque that lists the names and ages of those who lost their lives that day. Over 40 of those names are children under the age of two. The sole survivor of this massacre witnessed American troops tossing infants into the air to shoot them for target practice. The walls of this museum are decorated with actual photographs of the victims. Some of the photos show the victims just before, and after they were murdered. They show the roads and paths between the half dozen or so villages that were annihilated that day, and they are all littered with the mutilated bodies of the former inhabitants.

Team member Mike Boehm brought his fiddle with him to My Lai. As we all stood in front of the memorial, he played taps for all who perished in the War. Each of us expressed our condolences in our own private way.

On the five hour journey from My Lai to Da Nang, not a word was spoken in our van.

Our journey ended in Ha Noi, where we spent our last week. Although Ha Noi still bares the scars of the War, it has largely been rebuilt to its previous splendor—the Emerald City of the Orient. The most visible scar is the poverty that still prevails. Viet Nam *is* the third poorest nation in the world.

Join Us

The 66 Americans who have participated in the eight projects which the VVRP has completed in Viet Nam over the past six years are proud of the roll they have played in bringing about an end to the U.S. trade embargo against Viet Nam. It is a historical fact that the VVRP was the very first American organization to build anything in Viet Nam since the end of the War, when the "Friendship Clinic" at Vung Tao was completed in April 1989. In fact, 13 hours after President Bill Clinton finally ended the embargo in February, the VVRP received a fax from the Ha Noi government, thanking us for the "valuable contribution" we made toward bringing about an end to the embargo.

Year after year, in spite of the obvious obstacles, the VVRP has remained dedicated to "Healing the Wound of War!" This summer VVRP Team X will return to Viet Nam to build independent housing for blind Vietnamese veterans and to distribute hundreds of pounds of much needed medical supplies. Team XI will return to Viet Nam this winter.

THE VETERANS VIETNAM RESTORATION PROJECT

JOIN US!

Help restore Viet Nam.
Reconcile with the Vietnamese people.
See Viet Nam as a country, instead of a war.

Since 1989 dozens of men and women have returned to Viet Nam as members of VVRP Teams. Join us for a remarkable, once in a lifetime experience.

You will carry urgently needed medical supplies with you and work along side former enemies and allies in the construction of a humanitarian project. At the conclusion of the four week journey you will visit the places where you served.

Our group travel arrangements, which include an in-country tour organized by Vietnamese War veterans allow us to make the trips surprisingly inexpensive.

Join a VVRP team. Team IX departs this summer and Team X this winter. Call, write or fax for an application:

VVRP, P O BOX 369, GARBERVILLE, CA 95542
Tel (707) 923-3357, FAX (707) 923-4213

CONTINUED

THE HAT

me at O'Hare [airport, ed.] . I was standing in line at the ticket counter, and this guy wearing a suit behind me seemed to be bothered by it. He asked me if I had been in Vietnam; I said no, that I was wearing the hat because I support VVAW. He asked me where I got it; I answered that I bought it from VVAW people in Chicago. He said that he had been in Vietnam; I said nothing (mistake!). He said he didn't need some kid reminding him of it. I offered to take off the hat if it bothered him so much. (I was in a pacifist mood that day, as I had been reading Dave Dellinger's autobiography--one of the best books I have ever read). But when I offered to take it off, he laughed and said, "No, I want it. It should be mine." So I offered it to him. But he laughed again, saying, no that's OK, keep it. I think he was probably right--it was his hat, which he is letting me keep till he is ready to wear it. So now when people ask me where I got the hat I can say that someone gave it to me in O'Hare.

But the best hat story happened to me in northern Wisconsin. Somehow as a part of my new job at the University YMCA in Urbana I got roped into going to a "camping retreat" outside Lac du Flambeau. I hadn't been there very Flambeau. I hadn't been there very long when I was feeling pretty alienated away from the comforts of civilization and the company of my Urbana comrades. I felt surrounded by with a couple of unknown Wisconsin people for a road-repair project, one of them noticed my hat and asked me, are you a member of VVAW? No, just a supporter, I answered. "Well *I'm* a member of VVAW," he said.

Thus I met Jay Tobin.
Suffice it to say that Jay had a vehicle and after a hard morning's work of shoveling mud we repaired to town for a civilized meal of coffee, cigarettes and cholesterol. We traded stories about organizing against the Gulf War while we are.

So it should be apparent that a VVAW hat is a fine thing. It keeps the sun out of your eyes, educates the masses, keeps you occupied at airports and, when you're friendless and far from home, can spare you the excesses of the back-to-nature crowd. Don't leave home without it.

Bob Naiman is currently the Program Director for the University YMCA in Urbana-Champaign. He also serves on the Champaign County Board, and works with the Illinois Disciples Foundation in Champaign, the Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative, International Jewish Peace Union, and the Palestine Solidarity Committee.

Veterans Peace and Reconciliation Park

On December 31, 1993, in Hanoi, Vietnam, a contract for the building of a Veterans Peace and Reconciliation Park was drawn up and signed by Nguyen Nhu Nga, Nguyen Duc Van and Nguyen Ngoc Hung, representatives for the Vietnamese chapter, and Roy M. Boehm, representative for the American chapter. The site for this park is located near Van Noi village, Dong Anh district; about 4 Km. north of Hanoi. Land was donated by the Agriculture and Forestry Departments.

This park will consist of fish ponds, fruit trees, shrubs and flowers. The focal point of the park will be a mound, based on Native American effigy mounds, in the shape of a dove.

The idea for the park originated from a visit by Nguyen Ngoc Hung in late 1990 to the Highground Memorial in central Wisconsin. He was taken there while on a visit to Madison where he talked to veterans groups and others about the need for reconciliation and friendship.

Hung's visit to the Highground had a powerful effect on both he and the American veterans. he was impressed by the emphasis on healing at the memorial, but he was profoundly moved by the Dove Mound. Hung was told of the significance of the mound; that is was a place to go to remember their friends who are missing or were killed, a place to leave their own pain behind, a place so powerful that some veterans had willed their ashes to be placed on the mound when they died. When Hung was told of this, he went to the mound and burned incense and said a prayer for his brother who is missing in action.

Last summer, when I heard that Hung was going to be in the U.S. again, I arranged to have him come to Madison again to speak. By this time I had begun my own journey toward healing. In February, 1992, I went back to Vietnam for the first time since the war. I went with eleven other veterans from across the U.S. to Xuan Hiep village, Dong Ngai province, to build a medical clinic. That experience was powerful for all of us and showed me how much a part of my life Vietnam is.

In the process of organizing Hung's talks, I heard about his experience at the Highground and started thinking about the possibility of building a memorial park like that in Vietnam. When Hung arrived we talked about this idea, both of us convinced of the power this park would have for healing and reconciliation. This would not be a memorial to war. It would be a green living entity with a Dove Mound as it's centerpiece.

When I arrive in Hanoi last December, I saw first hand just how much the veterans there want this park. Not only do they not hate us, there is an empathy and bond there that exists only between veterans. Every meeting was filled with enthusiasm and excitement, an intense desire for this park to happen. In spite of the fact that the Vietnamese government has donated this land, this is a grassroots effort by the veterans there.

Work will by started this summer by the Vietnamese, depending on an initial funding by the American chapter of $10,000. this work will prepare the site for the coming together of veterans from both countries in October to build the Dove Mound.

Although we need funding for the park, it is just as important that veterans come to Vietnam to participate in the work on this memorial. The schedule now is to arrive in Hanoi in late October, 1994 (exact date will be determined later), to work for two days building the mound. On the third day there will be ceremonies celebrating this event. Following the ceremonies, the Vietnam veterans have offered to arrange for travel to our old AO's or anywhere in Vietnam.

This park is a chance to work with each other, former enemies, to heal ourselves and our countries. To build instead of destroy, and to finally put the war behind us and move together as friends. And, finally, the Vietnamese want us to come and see their country at peace.

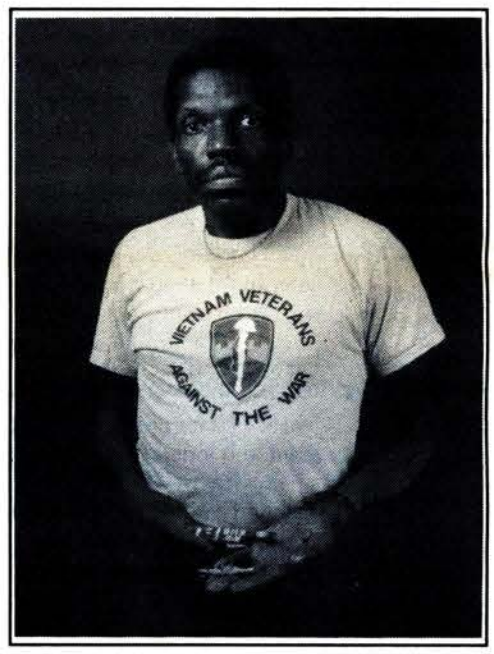
The Religious Society of Friends, (Quakers) has agreed to set up an account for us for tax exempt contributions. Make checks out to Madison Monthly Meeting. Be sure to note on the check either Veterans Park or Peace Park. Mail to Religious Society of Friends, 1704 Roberts Ct., Madison, Wisconsin 53711. For more information contact Roy M. (Mike) Boehm at 608-767-3399, or write to 4035 Ryan Rd., Blue Mounds, Wisconsin 53517.

- PROPOSAL -

Rough Side of the Mountain: A Documentary Portrait of Clarence Fitch

"For me and other black GIs in Vietnam in 1967, things were changing. Things going on in the States affected our behavior in Vietnam. The whole black power movement was taking place there, too. We were growing Afros, expressing ourselves through ritualistic handshakes, African beads, trying to eat up as much of the black music as we could get our hands on. We kind of segregated ourselves; we didn't want to integrate into what we considered the white man's war. And our consciousness had been raised to the point that it wasn't our war. I felt pretty guilty about being in Vietnam as a black man, knowing what I know... and my guilt was reflected in my behavior." *-- Clarence Fitch*

Clarence Fitch died May 7, 1990, aged 42. Born in Harlem, raised in Jersey City, he was a son, father and husband, a postal worker, a Vietnam veteran, a recovering drug addict, a peace activist and a person with AIDS. Clarence's life-history represents a generation of African Americans whose lives were marked by the disillusionment of the Vietnam War, a simultaneous coming to consciousness about racism and militarism in America, and the drug and AIDS epidemics of the 1980s.



"Rough Side of the Mountain" will be a thirty-minute documentary telling the story of Clarence Fitch's life, from his teenage years as a marine in Vietnam to his subsequent anti-war activism, from his struggle with narcotics addiction to his final battle with AIDS. Clarence's personal testimony will be intercut with contemporary interviews with his family and friends and with video footage and photographs of his participation at community events and on fact-finding peace delegations in Panama and Nicaragua, and his speaking with high school students. The piece will conclude with footage of Clarence's family as they complete his panel to be joined with the National Names Quilt on the Mall at the Washington Monument, just a few score feet away from the Vietnam Memorial.

"Rough Side of the Mountain" will poetically illustrate the many changes in Clarence's life while illuminating the strength and perseverance of the human experience. Some themes to be explored are Clarence's difficult recovery from a 13-year drug habit, his growth to an profound understanding of the connection between black consciousness and peace activism, his mentoring and leadership role among high school students and hundreds of adults in recovery, and finally, his courage as a person living with AIDS. His story is a valuable contribution to contemporary African American history: this documentary will fill a media void, and construct a unique understanding of the 1960s, 70s and 80s through the diverse and triumphant experiences that were Clarence's life.

Tami Gold (Producer/Director) is an award-winning video artist whose work includes: "Facing AIDS: Stories of Healthcare Workers," "Prescription for Change, From Bedside to Bargaining Table," and "Signed, Sealed and Delivered: Labor Struggle in the Post Office." She is Executive Co-Producer of the television program "Labor at the Crossroads" and Professor of Communications at Hunter College. Her work has been screened at the New York Film Festival, the Museum of Modern Art, and other local and international festivals. She has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and Video Arts fellowships from the NJ Council on the Arts. Along with experience and talent, Tami brings to this project a deep and long friendship with Clarence and his family.

Elena Schwolsky-Fitch (Project Consultant) is a pediatric AIDs nurse in Newark, NJ. A founding member of the Nurses' Network, she worked several years as an RN organizer for Local 1199. She has been a member of the steering committee of the New Jersey Rainbow Coalition, and remains active in her local community. She met Clarence through support work for striking postal workers in Jersey City and began a 10-year relationship in which she shared both his recovery from drug addiction and his battle with AIDS. As Clarence's widow and partner who shared both his struggles and triumphs, Elena brings a unique and important perspective to this production.

Gregory Payton (Project Consultant) is a community health educator, specializing in substance abuse and AIDS prevention, and working at professional, civic and social agencies with active and inactive substance abusers and their significant others. Active in many organizations, including Vietnam Veterans Against the War, War Resisters League, and Urban League Pediatric AIDS Advisory Council, he has spoken at conferences in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Greg is also a photographer and an ethno-musicologist, specializing in African American popular music of the 1950s through the 1990s. As a African American, Vietnam veteran, recovered substance abuser, peace activist, and one of Clarence's closest friends, Greg's vision, experience and objectives are critical to the making of this documentary.

This proposal has been endorsed by the Clarence Fitch (New York/New Jersey) Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. All inquiries and contributions should be addressed to:

Clarence Fitch Youth Educational Fund
64 Chestnut Street
Montclair, NJ 07042
(201) 783-7383

Obituaries

Dr. Ron Sable

Dr. Ron Sable, Physician, gay rights activist, longtime VVAW member and catalyst for social change.

Ron Sable died December 30, 1993, of complications from AIDS.

A medic in Vietnam, he joined and was president of the local VVAW chapter in Kansas in 1970. He continued as a local leader while in medical school at the University of Missouri.

After moving to Chicago, he began working at Cook County Hospital. He founded IMPACT, a leading Illinois gay and lesbian political action committee. When women's right to choose was challenged during the Reagan years, he appeared on the front page of the newspapers saying he'd continue to respect women's rights, no matter what the law said.

A original backer of Harold Washington, Ron served on two city human rights committees—gay/lesbian and veterans.

He ran as the first openly gay candidate for the City Council in Chicago and came within a few hundred votes of winning. "As a result of Ron's campaign. . . many gay and lesbian political organizations developed after people realized they could be forces in the city," said Alderwomen Helen Shiller.

Ron Sable

He cofounded a AIDS and HIV clinic at County Hospital in 1983. He volunteered at the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic. He was a founding Board Member of the AIDS Foundation which honored him in 1992.

He spoke frequently at VVAW functions and was respected in the vets community.

Survivors include his partner Jose Narvaez; two sons, John and Mathew; his mother, Barbara; and a sister, Cindy Weinstein.

Who' in charge here?

by Steve Geiger

President Clinton assumes a defensive posture towards the military establishment: his Administration suffers, his agenda is stymied, his political future is put at risk. He should stop acting like he has to make excuses for his draft history. Until he starts acting like the Commander-in-Chief he was elected to be, the military will bend him to their will.

Maybe he was naive to try to fulfill his campaign promises on gays in the military right away. Maybe he failed to prepare the Pentagon adequately for the change. Certainly he allowed the issue to be redefined out from under his feet: somehow the problem became the "comfort" of heterosexuals instead of the safety and dignity of homosexuals. The Clinton team didn't think it through—they lost and have been in retreat ever since.

The military sees the President as weak and they do not respect weakness. Last March, the President visited the carrier Theodore Roosevelt, where he was the butt of jokes and gibes about his policies. Last May, Major General Harold Campbell called the President a gay-loving, pot-smoking, draft-dodging womanizer at an Air Force banquet in the Netherlands. He was finally docked a month's pay and retired ahead of schedule. But in October, Navy Secretary John Dalton wanted Chief of Naval Operations Frank Kelso disciplined for his sabotage of the Tailhook inquiry. Kelso kept his command, and not a single officer was court-martialed.

These incidents illustrate the background of far more serious military threats to administration policy. U.S. policies in both Somalia and Haiti demonstrate command failures. When Defense Secretary Les Aspin was asked to approve more armor for Somalia, he asked for clarification of the request. By the time this message made it back down through the chain of command it had become a denial. Seventeen Army Rangers were killed—at least one mutilated and dragged through the streets. Another was taken prisoner. Of course American policy in Somalia was muddle-headed, and the mission itself ill-advised.

The Haitian debacle is even stranger. A Navy transport turns away and the U.S. envoy beats a hasty retreat from a few dozen Haitian thugs, resurrected *Macoutes*. Yet the potential for violence in Port-au-Prince is well-known. The defiant confidence of the Haitian military has been long established. So who would send an official entourage into a violative situation with a handful of M.P.s with sidearms for protection? Maybe the Clinton team is more than usually inept, but security for the landing was a military responsibility.

The President's responses? Announce and set a date for the withdrawal from Somalia. Dismiss Les Aspin (and nominate Bobby Ray Inman, another guy with a comfort-level problem). Continue returning Haitian refugees to the brutal government.

Whatever we think about what we did in Vietnam, we don't make excuses about his decision. Twenty-five years ago Clinton took the same course chosen by thousands of others who are now doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen and construction workers. Some people paid dearly for the pacifist choice, though not many as dearly as the hundred of thousands who felt patriotic and signed up.

But the war in Indochina was not just any war: it was illegal and unjust. Young Bill Clinton had the democratic right to oppose the war, and he was right to oppose it. When President Clinton acts like he as something to be ashamed about, his credibility erodes. Leaving aside America's continuing failure to come to terms with the Vietnam experience, this loss of credibility is dangerous.

It also plays into the grudge the brass carry against him. It deprives him of any military policy. If they can make him look bad, they may not have him around after 1996. In the meantime with partisan political support they can defend their own turf, extracting as much cash from Congress as the traffic will bear. That's $291 billion a year.

Pulitzer Prize-winning Vietnam veteran

Lewis B. Puller Jr.

Lewis B. Puller, Jr., 48, Pulitzer Prize winning author, disabled Vietnam veteran committed suicide on May 11, 1994.

The son. A marine general "Chesty" Puller, Lewis Puller lost both legs and parts of his hands when he stepped on a land mine in I Corps in 1968.

His book, *Fortunate Son: The Healing of a Vietnam Vet is* about his experiences with his father (the most decorated marine in World War II), Vietnam combat, his anti-war feelings (see exerpts), depression and alcoholism.

He supported normalized relations with Vietnam and had returned from a visit with disabled North Vietnamese veterans.

Unfortunately he could not reconcile his pain. He shot himself, leaving family and friends.

The third week of April of that year more than a thousand Vietnam veterans gathered in Washington to protest American involvement in the war. On Sunday, April 19, 1971, they began assembling in West Potomac Park, and their activities over the next five days, reported extensively on national and local television and in newspapers throughout the country, came to be known as Operation Dewey Canyon III after two similarly named earlier military operations in Vietnam. I was not a part of the antiwar movement and indeed thought that the motives of many of its leaders were self-serving and destructive to the country, but as the week wore on and I watched my former comrades give vent to their feelings and frustrations, I was almost persuaded to go to Washington and join them.

In the course of the week they conducted a ceremony for the war dead near the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington Cemetery, established a campsite on the mall, demonstrated at the Pentagon and at the Supreme Court, and staged a candlelight march around the White House. Throughout the week they lobbied on Capital Hill for an end to the war. One articulate young combat veteran named John Kerry delivered a moving address before a special session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, for me, summed up the sense of betrayal and the disillusionment I felt toward the administration and the leadership that had directed the course of the war from the safety of its Washington power base.

On Friday, April 23, in a culmination of the events of the week, the protest veterans were scheduled to march to the steps of the Capital and discard their medals in a symbolic gesture of their feeling of having been discarded themselves by the nation. These were my brothers, not starry-eyed intellectuals or malcontents dedicated to the overthrow of our form of government, but soldiers and marines, any of whom had paid for their perspectives with shattered lives and shattered limbs. They were now saying that their sacrifices had been meaningless, that my sacrifice had been meaningless, and that the precious blood spilled by our dead and maimed fellow veterans had been meaningless. For years I had been hearing similar rhetoric from antiwar spokesmen whose ideology war foreign to me; but I was now hearing from those young men whose kinship with me had been forged in the bloody crucible of Vietnam, and its impact, like a for lifting from a shrouded landscape, stripped me of my remaining self-delusions.

On Thursday night, before the climatic last day's events in Washington, I took my medals from our bedroom closet and debated whether I should drive to Washington to throw them away. As I sat silently in the dimly lit closet feeling the weight of bronze and sliver in my hand and studying the red, white, and blue stripes of my Silver Stand and the majestic cameo of George Washington on my Purple hearts, I know that I could never part with them . They had cost me too dearly, and thought I now say clearly that they war in which they had been earned was a wasted cause, the medals still represented the dignity and the caliber of my sacrifice and of those with whom I had served. I could no more discard them than I could repudiate my country, my Marine Corps. or my fellow veterans. As I put them away, I was very sad and very tired by grateful nonetheless that my children were asleep in their beds in American rather than anywhere else in the world.

—excerpt from Fortunate Son

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Casuality of War

Incarcerated Veterans Not Just a Statistic

David Curry

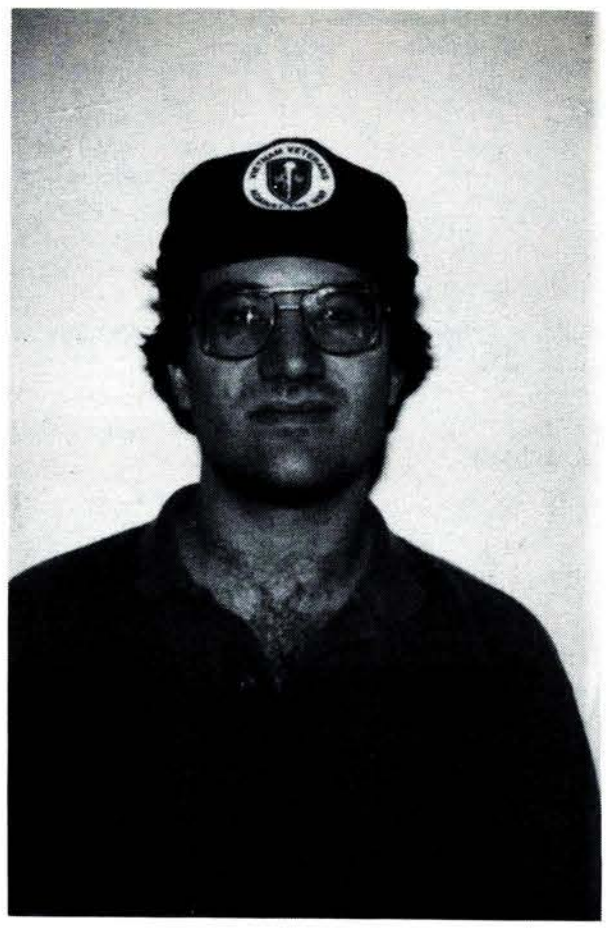
National Staff

On Veterans Day 1992, Johnnie W. Shaffer was formally presented a Combat Infantry Badge, a Purple Heart, and a Vietnam Service Ribbon for service rendered 23 years earlier with the Americal Division in Chu Lai. It's always nice to see the system catch up with a vet and see that he gets what he's so long had coming to him. In Shaffer's case, however, the system didn't have to look far to find him in his status as an inmate in the West Virginia Correctional Center. Actually the system doesn't have to look very far for a lot of Johnnie's brothers and sisters either.

In 1985, The Veteran featured a story about incarcerated veterans, detailing their numbers and their needs. This story was intended as an update, but the most recent government publication on incarcerated veterans is older than our original story. In 1981, when the Bureau of Justice Statistics issued its most recent publication on the subject, it was reported that in 1979, about a fourth of state and federal prisoners in the U.S. were veterans of military service. Of these 65,500 prisoners, over half had served in the military during the Vietnam War and over 13,000 of these had completed tours in Southeast Asia.

Statistics never mean as much as the human beings that they represent, but the 13,000 far exceeds any estimate of POW's or MIA's alleged to have ever been held by Hanoi. The 25% figure is a smaller proportion than the 40% of American homeless who are veterans. What is most missing, however, is any more recent statistic. The date of the last public release of information on incarcerated veterans stands a warning signal of how long it's been since anyone checked to see how many veterans found a prison cell to be part of their veterans benefits package. The statistic as its 1979 date is pre-Reagan-Bush and all the extremes of neglect associated with those three long terms of conservative Republican administration.

But a Bureau of Justice Statistics report sent through a time machine can't be the only source of information on incarcerated veterans, or can it? We contacted the Bureau of Prisons, the American Correctional Association, Bureau of Justice Statistics, House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), VVA Legal Services, VFW, American Legion, and American Civil Liberties Union Prison Project, and all we were able to obtain was the one 1981 publication. Maybe we'll try again later, in hopes that someone will give a damn.



Bob wearing the hat.

The Hat

By Bob Naiman

Some time ago Barry Romo came down to Urbana to take part in a panel on oppression in the military.

At the end of the meeting there was the usual milling about the propaganda table. But in addition to the usual flyers and buttons, Barry had brought some special merchandise from Chicago--VVAW hats. We were all duly impressed when Barry opened the bag to reveal the sturdy caps and several of us opened our wallets. For my own part, not only do I like baseball-type caps, but I sorely need one for softball duties. Of course, for a "man of the left" not just any insignia will do: only a scab would wear a "CAT" hat these days, and sports logos are frowned on in some hard core PC circles. So a VVAW cap was the silver bullet; we put on our new caps immediately.

On the way to the mandatory post-meeting libations, someone said something about "posing as veterans"; Barry of course smashed this notion immediately, pointing out that we were proclaiming our support for VVAW--what could be better than that?

Ever since then I've been wearing the hat, and I've had some interesting experiences. Here are few of them.

A typical comment at work, given my age (27), was "hey... you're not a veteran!" to which my typical response was "well, if I were wearing a Cubs hat you wouldn't say, "hey, you don't play for the Cubs!" This usually drew a laugh. Then I would often get to say something about what VVAW is and why I support it. This shows that a VVAW hat is an effective political tool.

A more bizarre experience happened to

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Milwaukee Fourteen

Dave Kettenhofen
NATIONAL COORDINATOR

On September 24, 1968, fourteen men broke into the Selective Service office in Milwaukee, Wis., stole 10,000 draft files of 1-A classified young men, then publicly burned them in an area outside the building. this Vietnam War protest action landed the "Milwaukee 14" in jail for sentences averaging one year each and resulted in the deportation of one, Michael Cullen, to his homeland of Ireland for eighteen years. Fifty similar raids, sparked by this event, occurred throughout the U.S. in the following four years.

The "Milwaukee 14" marked the 25th Anniversary of their action with a reunion demonstration, public forum, and dinner. Eight of the protesters were able to attend, while two are deceased, and the others couldn't make it for various reasons. All remain committed to the struggle for peace and justice.

The high point of the reunion was the two hour forum held at Marquette University which attracted approximately 200 people. Many issues of concern were discussed, including the war situation in Somalia and Bosnia, the violence in our own communities here in the U.S., and the role of the news media in shaping people's opinions of world events. Many of the participants stressed the point that we as individuals must stand up and fight for our beliefs and commitments before we point accusatory fingers at governments and institutions for their actions.

There were a number of statements made concerning Vietnam veterans which were encouraging. Michael Cullen said, "I think it's important that we remember that we need to be reconciled to those who went to war, even in Vietnam, sometimes against their will, sometimes because their conscience also led them." He said, "We must have a healing with vets." As a gesture of reconciliation between Vietnam Veterans and war protesters at home, Cullen and I stood up before the gathering, shook hands, and embraced each other. Cullen then went on to salute the Vietnam Veterans who joined the protest movement and in particular the actions at Dewey Canyon III, where the Vets threw their medals on the steps of the Capitol.

Art Heitzer, who was student body president at Marquette in 1968 and is presently a lawyer, spoke out on the plight of Vietnam Veterans. He said that although many war protesters at home, such as the "Milwaukee 14", paid the price for their actions with beatings and jail sentences, many veterans are still paying for their experience. Thousands of Vietnam Veterans continue to fight the war, with homelessness, PTSD, and suicide. They need the support of the people. Art's law specialty is working with Vietnam Veterans in anti-discrimination suits.

James Forest, who flew in from Holland, said the message to be learned from the "Milwaukee 14" is, "Don't be bullied or manipulated or guilt-tripped into obedience - or disobedience. You have a conscience; learn to hear it; no one can hear it for you."

Fernando and Marcia Lopez with Louis in Boaco, Nicaragua.

VVAW Meets with Disabled Nicaraguan Vets

Louie DeBenedette

Clarence Fitch Chapter, NJ,NY

I returned to Nicaragua by land on March 14, 1993. I planned to visit the wheel chair Sandinista veterans whom our chapter had sponsored in this country in 1990 and who had joined VVAW at the anniversary of the Kent State massacre. I was accompanied by a former Sandinista soldier who had family in Nicaragua.

The situation among the disabled veterans has changed radically since the new UNO government had taken power. It is now very difficult for a disabled veteran to obtain medicine. A normal pension for a paraplegic is only twenty dollars a month. Unemployment in the country is over fifty per-cent. The chances for employment by a person in a wheelchair are very small. Often the family has to help out with their meager funds. It is obvious that the policy of the United States is to finish off the Sandinista little by little and as in our country, hit the veteran hard. The new government and the U.S. work hand in hand to prevent any Sandinista victory in 97.

I spent many days with Fernando Lopez, the ex-president of ORD (Organization of Disabled Revolutionaries), who visited us at Kent State. Fernando is paralyzed but drives a mean Susuko stick shift pick-up, Russian made. Daniel Ortega, who is still the leader of the Sandinista is up on charges now for having donated so much government property to the people before he left office. A lot of Susukos made their way into the hands of the people. I still think that Daniel Ortega is the most compassionate and intelligent President many of us have seen in a long time. Fernando has had to drive his truck up to the market and look for work hauling goods. Fernando is an honest man and loves his country. He is married and they hope some day to have children through a special procedure at the hospital in Manage. But the expense is great.

I had to put over $500 into the truck to keep it running. We visited a town called Boaco to make another donation to Antonio Oporta, wheel chair vet who needed more leather to make and sell saddles. The shop has been in existence for thee years and employs a couple of veterans. I spent Good Friday and Easter up there in the mostly UNO city of former Contra. There were may processions and religious services but Antonio and I sat these out watching X-rated movies taking turns watching for the parade to pass by and to look holy. Both Antonio and I are not irreligious, Jesus struggled for Justice for the poor. These religious services did not project the Christ I believe in. However, Nicaragua is full of faith but most of it is celebrated in the base communities, not in big churches. Cm. Thomas Borge, who is not Christian, said that the Christians were the Revolution. Chamorro's reign has brought back conservative religion which seeks power, not LOVE. Domino's Pizza donated four million dollars to Cardinal Abando y Bravo to construct the cathedral in Manage. Ten thousand children beg for food in the streets of Manage. It was much better under the Sandinista.

I was saddened by the changes that had occurred. I can imagine what the U.S. has been up to in Vietnam by refusing to open up trade. In all the countries, Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Vietnam there ought to be restitution for what had been done there by our war making. The struggle is terribly long and yet the Sandinista I met continue to want justice. We are all in this together and our common struggle is to disarm the U.S. and to create a civilization of LOVE. Our veteran friends in Nicaragua greet us and urge us to continue the struggle together. Dave Cline urged this fraternal sentiment in a letter I presented to the vets on behalf of VVAW.

GI's, Vets March on D.C.

Dave Curry

National Staff

Over a thousand men and women serving on active duty and veterans joined hundreds of thousands of other advocates of full citizenship rights for gays and lesbians in Washington, D.C., on April 25. Members of military service and veterans were the third group to appear in the parade that wound by the White House and down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. Preceded by a small group of dignitaries (mostly show business types and members of Congress) and a stark contingent of AIDS victims, gay and lesbian active duty personnel from every branch of service marched in well-dressed ranks. One color guard preceded the active duty personnel and two more were staggered further back in the parade. Rank insignia as high as those of colonel and lieutenant colonel were worn proudly. Regional signs and banners indicated the national representativeness of participants. Perhaps, the most surprising contingent appeared near the end of the active duty and military veterans groups. About fifty cadets from the three service academies walked in an obviously nervous but determined throng behind a collective banner.

V V R N

MARKS 5th ANNIVERSARY

It was 5 years ago this past month, on July 14, 1989, that the Vietnam Veterans Radio Network began transmitting from the local Community FM Radio Station here in Kansas City, Missouri.

Vietnam Veterans Radio Network

Since that first transmission back in '89, VVRN has grown greatly and is currently transmitted by Community, University, and other non-commercial FM radio stations in the U.S., Canada, and Belgium...and world-wide via shortwave from Radio for Peace International in Costa Rica.

VVRN's informative, educational, and entertaining transmissions are a blend of historical reference, personal experience, and Rock & Roll! RFPI's Program Guide describes VVRN this way, "*VVRN is forthright in its criticism of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war and those that followed. Its provocative message is interspersed with music of the era, giving life and memory to the words...unique and sometimes shocking in nature.*"

VVRN's weekly, half-hour transmissions are available to all non-profit radio stations free of charge (individual subscriptions are available for a tax-deductible donation). For further information write to VVAW/VVRN, 7807 N. Avalon, Kansas City, Missouri 64152, or call us at area code 816-587-5966.

SHADOW PEOPLE

Elton Manzione
Southern Regional Coordinator
Athens, GA

He sat staring through the flap of the briefing tent at the green mountains beyond. The green! How strange it was. There was no green like it anywhere in the world. Sharp, crystalline, almost painful in its intensity—it was Vietnam's green. Like a jade Buddha it was sometimes facinating, and like an iridescent blowfly it was sometimes repulsive. Today it was merely distant.

"You will be a minimum of three clicks beyond the demarcation line at the Ben Hai River. That means North Vietnam and, gentlemen, you know what that means."

He knew, but did the briefing officer really know? Did the dumb second lieutenant drowing on in this tent really know the meaning of no resupply, no air support, no artillery, no acknowledgement? He knew and the men squatted around him on the floor knew.

"Shadow people, again," Van Lesser whispered to him.

Shadow people. It was their name for themselves. Never heard and never seen they worked in the dark and left only bodies behind to mark their passing. Their own troops rarely say them When they came into a base camp for a few days standdown their area was declared offlimits. They lived in dark bunkers and came out only at night.

"Keeps you night vision from getting fucked up," he told a curious grunt one evening. In a nine-month period it was one of the few things he said to anyone who was not one of those squatted around him.

In the official rosters they were called SEALs. In the Order of Battle they were B-53 detachment of MACV-SOG. The other troops called them crazy. The Vietnamese called them *Ange d' Morte*. They called themselves The Shadow People.

". . . proceeding up the banks of this small stream," the officer pointed with a stick.

The officer's boyish good looks were all the more disgusting in contrast to the haggard faces and aging eyes of the men around him. How this group had ever become part of the Navy's most elite unit was a mystery to him. "Surf" Chambers wanted nothing more than to drive his souped up '56 Chevy—"fastest in Southern California"—and shoot the cural of his Hobie surfboard. "Professor" Downey loved books—damned near more than anything in the world. "Someday I'll write one of own. All of you'll be in it," he had confided one night. Kenny Van Lesser flunked out of accounting school, destroyed a family dream and got a draft notice. "The first businessman in the family was a clerk with the Dutch East India Company in 1620; Wall Street, not Quang Tri, was what my father had in mind." Eddie "Sweets" Swetz had at first been bothered by having to explain the inordinate number of perfumed letters he had received his first two months in country. Now it seemed the "first-class womanizer" was bothered by the fact they had stopped coming.

And he had always known his own rootless wanderings would put him where he didn't want to be. He had always felt like the right person in the wrong place. College was a wash. He hated manual labor. For him, Vietnam was inevitable.

"It is important that this threat to free movement in the area be . . ."

"Terminated!" Chambers finished the phrase for the lieutenant.

"Mr. De Gennaro, I'd appreciate it if you would persuade your men to refrain from smart-assed comments," the lieutenant shot at him. He stood, whirled his back to the lieutenant and fixed Chambers with a glare. Just as Chambers chuckled, he lifted the corner of his mouth at him and gave him a concealed thumbs-up sign. Chambers suppressed his own smile.

"Sorry sir," he mumbled, turning his back to the lieutenant.

"The gun emplacement at Loi An must be eliminated," the officer shouted "and the agitators in the village must be . . ."

"New-tral-eyes-d," Downey intoned.

The lieutenant stopped, glaring first at Downey and then at him.

"I'm not going to tolerate much more of this. Why can't you maintain a little discipline among these clowns?"

He tried his best to bore two holes through Downey's chest with the iciness of his stare but, knowing it wouldn't happen, turned instead to the lieutenant. "And why can't you speak fucking English . . . sir?"

"Come again?"

"I just mean we get tired of it. It all sounds so clean and precise. Why don't you just say 'kill, destroy, kidnap, blow-up, waste'? I mean who the hell are we kidding?"

"De Gennaro you know as well as I do that <u>you</u> and <u>your</u> men decide the exact fashion in which these orders are carried out. How you neutralize the threat is your business."

He bit his lip. It <u>was</u> his mission. The war had sifted down to just him and the four others squatted on a dirt floor.

He walked to the back of the tent and faced the lieutenant, the other four still on the floor between them.

Van Lesser, the timid, raised his hand.

"Sir, how are we going to get in and out?"

"Ground insertion, gentlemen. We can't have any choppers buzzing around up these. If our presence is suspected it could cause an incident."

"And out? What about out?"

"Same, same. No extraction choppers."

Van Lesser shook his head.

He stared at the lieutenant whose eyes only touched his and brushed away. Inserted. Extracted and inserted again.

"Question, Mr. De Gennaro," the lieutenant asked in response to his stare.

"No sir. No Questions."

"Then I guess I 'm to assume you know it all. Is that correct?"

He shook his head slowly. "I don't know it all, sir. This is just my 18th mission."

"I'm familiar with the record of this squad. Your methods are . . . Let me put it this way, in a conventional war you'd probably all have been court martialed and shot by now."

"We get the neutralizing done."

"That's all we want on this. It's yours," the lieutenant turned on his heel and strode from the tent, tapping his pointer against his leg.

"What an asshole," Van Lesser said.

"Downey, Chambers! You two made me look like a jerk in front of that candy assed briefing officer again; I'm going to kick ass and take names. Got that?"

"Chambers shruged his shoulders. "Shit! I was just fooling around. Ease up, D.G."

Downey just smirked and turned his hands up in a helpless gesture.

"Jesus Christ, another over the fence mission," Van Lesser grumbled, as they were leaving the tent.

Nothing new really, most were over the fence. The grumbling was just Kenny's way of getting ready.

When they got back to the compound Swetz jumped up on a table and began singing, his canary-like head bobbing and his body swaying to a Rhumba beat.

"Brassiere, I love the things you hold so dear
And when you press them in my ear
You shove my balls in second gear.
Brassiere, brassiere.

Well, it sounded like "Brazil". Swetz was getting ready too.

Surf smiled at Sweets' antics and began to crack his knuckles as he walked in tighter and tighter circles—winding his mainspring he called it.

He turned from the pair toward his own hooch. Slipping into the darkened bunker, he took off the green cotton fatigues and sat naked on the dirt floor. He forced his vision into the darkest corner. Crossing his hands in his lap and straightening his back he began a slow, steady breathing. With each inward breath he inhaled a little more of the darkness, the decay, the death and the green around him. With each outward breath he forced a little more of the humanity, the tenderness, the logic and the fear from himself. He focused on, sorted, catalogued and remembered each of the myriad sounds around him: hooch firls sweeping, a peddler on a squeaky bike, a c-ration can clattering into the garbarge. He breathen deeply. He listened to the murmers of chatter coming from the regular Army compound and the clatter of pots and pans from the Mess Hall. he recognized the Professor's footfalls passing the bunker. Exhaling, holding his lungs empty, he heard a dog padding and sniffing around the edges of the SEAL compound. He could hear the angry buzzing of a pair of flies somewhere in the opposite corner of the bunker. Then he heard Van Lesser's shuffle, Sweets' clearing his throat and the *fffft* of a tape being rewound. He stood and stepped through the door.

He walked naked across the dirt compound toward the others standing in a small circel. Chambers, the mantracker. Van Lesser, the demo man. Swetz, their nose. Downey, the eyes. And him—their ears. He could hear a man breathing at 30 feet.

He stepped into the center of the circle, and straddling the battery powered cassette player, stood looking for a moment at each of the faces. Van Lesser's eyes reflected tension, Chambers's resignation, Swetz's amusement. Only Downey's refused to yield any clue. They remanined hard, reflective.

He flipped the tape recorder on and stepped to his place on the edge of the circel. The thumping, savage beat of "Sympathy for the Devil" rolled out across the compound.

"Please allow me to introduce myself I'm a man of wealth and taste," Jagger sang as they slipped into black pajamas. The regular Army guys in the camp--clerks, gunners, grunts and radiomen—moved sheepishly away from the fence of the SEAL compound. Night was falling.

". . . killed the Czar and his ministers. Anastasia screamed in vain." They smeared the jagged lines of camouflage paint on their faces.

Looking into the small mirror as he buried the shine of his cheekbones in a swath of dark green paint he could hear the bongos, congos and maracas pumping in savage harmony. The blood pounded in his temples. He smiled, saw a grinning aparition in the mirror, shuddered and howled with Jagger.

"I rode a tank, held a general's rank when the blitzkreig raged and the bodies stank." Chambers snapped the bolt of his Belgian automatic rifle.

"every cop is a criminal and all you sinners, saints. . ." Downey twisted his garrote around a bamboo stick, snapped it and smirked as the bamboo cracked and shattered with the blow.

"Just call me Lucifer . . ." He ran his thumb over the edge of his Gerber knife. ". . . cause I'm in need of some restraint . . ." He plunged the point into the dirt, once, again, again, again, pulled it out with both hands and held it point up.

"So when you meet me have some courtesy, have some sympathy and taste. Use all you well-learned qualities or I'll lay your soul to waste." They shouted together now.

"Tell me baby, what's my name," he screeched along with Jagger as they walked single file toward the compound gate.

"Tell me baby, what's my name. Tell me sweetie, what's my name." He leered at the radioman standing by the fence and heard the man say under his breath. "The gooks are in for some shit tonight" as he watched their five dark shapes headed toward the jungle canopy.

"Woo hoo hoo, woo hoo hoo, aw haw hooo," Jagger's voice faded out across the compound as they disappeared into the high elephant grass.

It was dark before them, silent behind. Somebody had turned off the tape recorder. Somebody always did.

He could feel the dampness as the cool night began to distill the day's humidity out of the air around hime. He could see patches of moonlight through the light jungle canopy and his eyes burned through the darkness ahead.

He checked the radio. He liked carrying the radio, even though he knew it made him sure target.

They moved off the main trail and followed Downey, slithering through the brush parallel to the easier, but more dangerous, cleared trail. It was almost like when he was a kid, playing war in Independence Park.

It seemed as if each breach he brushed awakened a memory. Ludwig with the broken, bloodied nose; and his tears, the tears of a five-year-old over a hurt friend. Mary Lou in the small, white casket—drowned in a tub by an insane babysitter. "Wake up, Mary Lou," he had wispered to her. He was eight. What faith he had had then. Another branch jolted loose the memory of Maddox—the dumb kid from Mosellen, Ohio who had stepped on a mine and what was left went home in a handkerchief. The poor kid hadn't even gotten a chance to see his first sunrise in Vietnam. He had cried then. He wanted to cry now, but he couldn't—he had this switch. It kept him from hurting. He flicked it.

That's why he liked the radio. It was the other switch—a connection with reality; a way to pull him back from the jungle. He hit the button on the radio handset and listened for the click. He was always afraid it wouldn't work.

He walked up the column, touching each of the men on the shoulder and signing them to sit. he listened to the jungle. Downey's head circled and his eyes strained to pierce the darkness. Swetz sniffed the air like a dog. Only shen each of them nodded was the silence broken.

"Cover leader; Raven two. Radio check," he whispered into the handset.

"Raven two; Covey leader, check, came the reply. The radio check-in completed, they filed down the trail once again.

Every two hours they would perform this simple check-in procedure. It would let the officers back at the base camp know the team was still alive. It they didn't check-in the PIO officers would begin to formulate the official denials. They were not supposed to be where they were.

And he wasn't there. Not anymore. He had traveled down a 60,000 year-old staircase of racial memory and emerged into a primordial jungle. The soldier too young to shave was gone. He was a primitive man in black pajamas.

It was with the eyes of this primitive man that he saw the figure crouching below him on the trail. Downey saw it too and halted the group.

Downey, Chambers and himself held their positions as Swetz and Van Lesser move quietly and cautiously down hill toward the crouching figure. He drew the auto pistol from his waist band and eased the safety off.

Swetz and Van Lesser, knives drawn, moved closer to the figure. As if in silent meditation, the figure sat; unaware of the danger.

He watch his two men as they came almost to arm's reach of the figure and slowed his breathing so his aim, if needed, would be steady.

Swetz aimed his blade at the base of the figure's skull and move in for the kill. Suddenly, he turned back toward them, threw his hands up in exasperation and motioned for the others to come down. Van Lessor stood shaking his head.

He slipped the pistol back on safe and eased down the hill. Swetz pointed to the Buddha statue sitting along side the trail.

He almost wanted to laugh at their folly, but the serene face of the Buddha and the still drawn knoves of Swetz and Van Lesser reminded him the world was no longer humorous. He walked up to the statue and saw the can of fresh joss sticks sitting in the Buddha's lap. Little cones of piled ashes covered the area in front of the statute. He montioned Downey over and pointed to the incense container. Chambers and Van Lesser crossed to the other side of the trail. Downey gave him a thumbs up sign.

Swetz removed a grenade from his belt, pulled the pin. Downey put a few small rocks in the the bottom of the can and handed it to Swetz. The Buddha's upturned palms received the grenade and the weighted can held the detonator spoon in place.

Chambers and Van Lesser strung a trip wire, ankle high, across the trail a yard or two below the small jungle alcove in which the statue sat. At one end of the wire was a stout shoot of bamboo. At the other, a white phosphorous grenade.

He motioned the other four toward him, but before they could comply, held his hand up to stop them. He could hear movement further up the trail. He put his finger to his lips commanding silence from his four comrades.

Five or seven, he figured, judging from the voices. A courier team. The men moving down the trail made no effort to move quietly. He knew they were smug, confident. This was their territory. There would be no Americans here. It was their jungle. The night belonged to them.

He motioned Downey and Swetz to either side of the trail, just above the clearning. Chambers and Van Lesser nodded and moved to similar positions below the clearing. He slipped into the brush just behind the Buddha.

He had only been squatted in the bushes a few moments when he noticed a tree spider, nearly as large as his palm, moving slowly up his leg. He wanted to crush its repulsive hairiness, but the NVA courier team was already within ear shot. He gently brushed the creature from his leg.

Two of the Vietnamese approached the Buddha and one reached for the container of joss sticks.

The men shared a split second of immobility, brought on by surprise, as the grenade rolled from the Buddha's palms and landed at their feet.

Suddenly the calm sing-song of the Oriental voices turned to excited chatter as the NVA tried to flee up the trail, and down the trail.

He could feel the heat and hear the blast and splattering of shrapnel and dirt as the grenade detonated. The five NVA looked like panicky revelers pushing through a crowded fire exit, as they tried to flee their god.

The two men running down the trail were blinded by the white phosphorous grenade as it detonated.

Downey and Swetz tripped the two fleeing up the trail and stabbed mercilessly at them with their knives.

The last man stumbled aimlessly into the clearing, reeling from blindness, shock and fright.

He moved swiftly from behind the Buddha, knife in hand, just as the man seemed to regain his senses. he noted the panic in the man's eyes. The knife went easily into the man's throat and cut short the scream before it could leave his mouth.

He began to pull the documents from the man's courier pouch as the others came into the clearing.

"Christ we made a racket," Downey said.

"No shots, and the sound of the grenade doesn't carry very far," he replied.

"D.G. I think we've compromised our position."

"Bullshit. There's nobody out here."

"What did we do this for?" Van Lesser asked.

"Intelligence. We got maps, lists. Look at this shit," he said, profering the documents from the pouch. "Besides, did you have any better ideas?"

"Nah, I guess not," Van Lesser sheepishly admitted.

Downey leaned against the Buddha and shook his head.

"I think we fucked up!" he spat.

"And you don't get paid to think. I do," he snarled. Like a deft surgeon he manipulated his Gerber to remove the dead man's liver. Smiling at the reddish mass in his hands he lifted it and took a bit out of it, spitting the raw meat at Downey's feet.

"Sin loi. No Buddha heaven for this fucker," Swetz quipped.

"Let's get the fuck out of here," he said as the first of the blowflys descended on the piece of liver at the Buddha's base.

He moved up the trail and took the slack, number two, position in the five man chain. Downey was on point. Half an hour later they reached a clearing in the jungle. The village of Loi An, just 200 yards away, slept.

He motioned Van Lesser to his right and Chambers to his left. He handed the radio to Swetz and motioned for him to squat in place. Downey, with the grenade launcher, squatted along side Swetz.

Slithering on his belly, he entered the clearing. Swetz and Downey appeared as bushes behind him.

Drawing his legs up he pushed with the heels of his feet and slithered forward, moving like some perverse cross between a snake and a frog. Four and a half feet, two thirds of a of a body length, and he paused to listen. He could feel his heart pounding against his ribcage. The faint, whoosh, bumpt, whoosh of the blood pounding in his veins was the only sound he could hear. Drawing his legs up he pushed with the heels of his feet.

In the next two hours he repeated the motion more than a hundred times. The village gate was just two feet away. He pulled a long blade of grass from the ground and, like a wizard with an emerald wand, waved it in ever widening circles. About two and a half feet from the ground the blade bent slightly. He could faintly make out the trip wire in the pre-dawn darkness—booby trap. The wire was anchored to a fence just a few feet to his right. The free end, like a trail of breadcrumbs, led to a clump of bushes on his left. The half-moon crescent of a claymore was nestled in the center of the clump. As he reached in toward the claymour something rustled in the bush, brushed his hand and scurried, or slithered away. he rolled quickly onto his back, panting. He could feel his heart pound. He listened. Nothing. It took several huffing breaths to calm his shaking hands. He reached in the the claymore and carefully removed its firing mechanism, turned the mine around and replaced its detonator. The hundreds of steel balls splayed out by the mine when it went off would rapidly thin the ranks of his pursuers should anything go wrong with the mission. He wiggled through the slats in the gate. Loi An still slept.

He could see the thatched shed and camo net covering the anti-aircraft gun just ahead, right where the informant had said it would be. To the right was the hut of the cadre leader.

He watched as Van Lesser ducked behind the shed before going in to plant the demo charge. He hoped Chambers had taken up position behind the well to cover their retreat.

The door wasn't locked; they never were. It wasn't booby-trapped—they usually were. Inside he could hear the sleeping figures breathing; four of them by the sound of it. He remained motionless in the center of the room, waiting for Van Lesser's charge to go off, a dark form in the darkness. He noticed the almost imperceptible change in breathing of one of the figures. The signal that someone had crossed the threshold from sleep to wakefulness. He held his breath. The figure stirred. The sweat burned his eyes. The figure sat up. He moved. Placing his hand over the figure's mouth he slipped the 12 inch Gerber from its sheath. The figure began to struggle. He remembered the training session. Up, under the first rib. The blade went in. The figure struggled more. Turn up and push, through the heart and aorta. The figure ceased struggling.

As he withdrew the blade he heard the roar of an explosion. Van Lesser's charge on the gun. The pop, pop, pop of rifle fire came from the direction of the well.

He pulled the pistol from his belt and leveled it at the wakening figures in the hut. In the dark he was nearly invisible—a shadow. He spoke in a gutteral voice.

"Didi, you hear. Outside, didi."

The three remaining figures placed their hands on their heads and filed sheepishly out into the dirt clearing in front of the hut. As he stepped out he saw other groups of villages huddled in front of their homes. The middle-aged man he had just pushed out the door glared at him and muttered a phrase over and

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GULF WAR SYNDROME

Ray Parrish,
CHICAGO CHAPTER
STEERING COMMITTEE

In a recent Readers Digest "Humor in Uniform" story, a commander told his troops in the Persian Gulf War that they shouldn't worry about the smoke from the oil-well fires because the US Health Service said that they merely had to "avoid prolonged breathing."

This story reveals the government's attitude towards the health hazards the GI's encountered and sets the stage for this most recent victimization of American troops. I think that the thousands of veterans and their families who are suffering from the medical problems and resultant financial hardships of the "Gulf War Syndrome" find little humor in that story.

Congressional subcommittees held hearings and issued reports on the "mysterious" medical problems that are afflicting at least 5000 veterans of the Persian Gulf War. The information which came out during these hearings shows that US and allied troops twice reported exposure to chemical weapons during the war, and that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) have purposefully ignored medical evidence and misdirected their research, evaluation and treatment efforts, possibly in order to cover up the size and nature of the problem.

Persian Gulf vets have reported a variety of symptoms since their return; fatigue, headaches, weight loss, hair loss and discoloration, memory loss, skin rashes and growths, sensations of "pins and needles" in various areas, loss of sensation in various areas, confusion, nervousness, dizziness, muscular weakness and spasms, respiratory problems, deterioration of various organs, impotence, infertility, miscarriages and birth defects.

So far, the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs have asserted that the cause of these illnesses was "stress." The military's response was to simply discharge those military personnel whose medical problems affected their performance, but few got medical retirement or disability compensation. Some were punished for not being able to fulfill their duties.

The DVA began investigating these problems and set up a "Gulf War Veterans Registry," but only after the veterans' complaints got the media's attention, and Congressional and public opinion became a factor. So now another generation will join the millions of Atomic Bomb test, Agent Orange, PTSD and other disabled vets in their never-ending struggle to get medical care and compensation when challenged by "lost" records, DOD and DVA and "national security" policies.

"Tsk, tsk!"

MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY

One of the people testifying on June 9 before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Veterans Affairs Committee was Dr. Richard Haines, a Major in the Indiana National Guard. After spending thousands of dollars of his own money and evaluating the problems of hundreds of vets, he's come to the conclusion that the military simply doesn't want to see the truth: Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, MCS, also known as ecological or environmental illness or hypersensitivity.

According to Dr. Haines, possible causes of the veterans' problems include: pollution from the Kuwaiti oilfield fires, vaccines and medications designed as antidotes to biological and nerve gas weapons, aerial spraying of pesticides, spraying of diesel oil to control dust, radiation exposure from depleted uranium used in armor and armor-piercing shells, portable heaters using gas and diesel fuel in unventilated tents, contamination of drinking, cooking and washing water with diesel fuels, exposure to chemical/biological weapons when Iraqi arsenals were destroyed and Leishnamiasis, a parasitic infection.

It is this great variety of problems and possible causes, combined with the government's reluctance to take responsibility, which has resulted in so much confusion. Part of this has to do with the controversy surrounding Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. It is a relatively recent phenomenon that is misunderstood by many in the medical community and rejected by some. It is an acquired disease caused by or exacerbated by exposure to toxic chemicals or agents.

In a pamphlet for mental health professionals, Kay McCarty, a Chicago social worker, explains: "There is a growing concern that the thousands of toxic chemicals that have become part of daily living are adversely affecting certain segments of the population, causing the development of MCS in some. While most synthetic chemicals do not bother most people, the number of the "chemically sensitive" is growing at an alarming rate."

This is exactly what has happened to these veterans and a growing number of civilians, especially those living near waste dumps and incinerators. While their bodies may have been able to tolerate and recover from a slight exposure to several chemical agents or a higher exposure to a single agent, getting a heavy dose of several toxic agents may be enough to cause MCS, if it doesn't kill you immediately.

In my capacity as Executive Director of the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling, Dr. Haines and I had long conversations about the problems faced by Atomic Bomb and Agent Orange veterans and how the Persian Gulf vets could try to avoid these same pitfalls. Part of Major Haines testimony is titled "How to design a medical coverup." Since it "says it all," it's reprinted here.

"If a powerful, self-appointed group were to implement a medical cover-up, how would they proceed? What tactics would they employ? What public relations "spin" would they use? What conclusions would they draw."

"In any matter of major public policy, "lead" agencies come to the fore and are expected to address issues of major importance. The lead agencies involved in the Gulf War illnesses controversy have so far been the VA, DOD, and CDC in that order. And when a major controversy emerges, lead agencies routinely project themselves as omniscient, paternalistic, "everything's under control" type organization.

"But, the fact is, what we have is a leadership group that is quite out of control, that is without public accountability, that has abdicated its medical ethics and succumbed to private corporate interests.

"The cover-up problem for the managers, however, is that their game plan would leave this wide ranging collection of symptoms without a diagnosis, a tenuous proposition for a prestigious public institution that supposedly has "everything under control." And true to the tactics that powerful private interests for the past 30-40 years have exercised generally, they conjecture that stress is an underlying etiology, even though their own data supports no such hypothesis. Despite the fact that the psychiatric portion of the 123rd ARCOM study of these 79 Indiana Reservists is clear that the symptomatology is not of psychiatric origin nor structure, you skim over this part and send headlines throughout the country that stress is the primary etiology.

"But, in any event, you maintain to the Congress that there is no "unifying pattern" of specific illness, at least of all the illnesses that you believe in an have been compelled to consider. You would work hard to obscure from the masses that your basic blood test would not show toxics, nor metabolic imbalances, even if your patient group was demonstrating them. Despite the fact that widespread liver deficiency, anemia, and immunodeficiency are hinted in your own government test results, you retain these pathologies from public view.

"To tighten the lid on this coverup, you ignore major documentation flooding your office that the symptomatology all points to environmental illness, and you decline dozens of offers of free environmental testing, as well as cash offers from other sources to even pay for all of this.

"Next, for those soldiers whose conditions are medically dire, you concentrate only on the MANIFESTATIONS of their illness. You surgically remove the soldiers' strange, wartlike growths. their colon polyps, and for the episodal rashes, you prescribe ointments, which don't work, so you simply accuse them of poor hygiene.

"In any comprehensive coverup, mind control is a "multiplier," so before you even review their health history, or ask them if they've been around environmental hazards, you remind the veteran patient that his condition could not possible be from the Gulf War. And you brush off most of their ailments as incidental and attributable to other causes.

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SHADOW....

over. It sounded like "Mao Li" or "Molly". He motioned for the man to squat and saw his glare had changed to tears.

He took the radio from Swetz and turned to go back into the hut. If someone in the hooch were a cadre leader, as the MI types claimed, the there should be some documents around.

"Covey leader; Raven two. Standby," he said into the handset.

"Raven two; Covey leader. Standing by," came the reply.

Inside the hut he saw the horrible handiwork of his three minute visit. The girl lay on a pallet. An obscene red circle was spreading across the white cloth of her flowing Ao Dai dress. She looked young, maybe fourteen, but it was hard to tell. He deep brown almond eyes looked at him accusingly, forever open in death. He walked outside.

Chambers was questioning a villager in Vietnamese. As he heard the sing-song of their voices he thought of the white Ao Dai with its spreading red spot. He thought of a small white coffin and a bloody nose. The radio! Why couldn't he click the radio? He sets it down and wipes his bloody hand frantically on his pants. Van Lesser speaks to him, takes his arm, but he shugs him off and keeps on walking. Walking toward the jungle he drops his pistol. The other stare at each other, but none move. he walks into the cool darkness of the morning jungle and the shadows fold around him. The crackle of the radio drifts on the air. "Raven two; Covey leader. Standing by. Come in. Raven two; Covey leader. Acknowledge. Raven two . . ."

"The soldier/patient may have 15-20 symptoms, but instead of looking at the medical problem comprehensively, you churn them from specialist to specialist, each examining the tail of the medical elephant. It's called "end organ" orientation, and it's the way the US trains its MD's because, after all, it's easy to teach. So scrap the holistic approach and ignore the total neurotoxic affect on the human system, stay secure in your tidy area of specialization, and hand the guy a few more pills. After all. it's the pharmaceutical industry, and not the DAV, that will fund next year's research for your university hospital.

"When the public and the veterans start to press for environmental testing, you tell them their blood tests are for toxicities, even when they aren't. When they ask for tests appropriate to the environmental toxicity, you answer that "we don't do those here" or "they cost too much" or "we don't think they're necessary," even though these clinics use locally drawn samples/specimens in conjunction with outside labs and do so quite efficiently. And when your own medical staff becomes perplexed, or starts to question the diagnosis (or we might say) the lack of it, we transfer those recalcitrant to the research department.

"Still, the natives are restless. So with public fanfare, you appoint task forces, and blue ribbon committees and environmental coordinators. But, In so doing, you make sure they represent old-fashioned toxicology, traditional allergy and other figures who can be trusted with only those illnesses that we BELIEVE in. We appoint part-liners who have been very effective since the Agent Orange days at shaking arguments for a medical link.

"And you make sure no outside group is asked to provide peer review of your work. When the Navy does its Dayton, Ohio symposium, you make sure environmental illness goes unmentioned despite the fact that corporate oil interests in attendance know more about environmental illness than any university or research group, having fought it tooth and nail with tens of thousands of previous victims and victim groups through our system of legal "justice." Exxon, Mobil, BP and Texaco and the American Petroleum Institute and all the good ole boys are there. After all, we have to keep control and make sure this situation doesn't get out of hand.

"The legal system is kept intact, because chemical victims have to prove causality and the feds, who won't fund any such research, are persuaded to say "no." The feds also make sure the health effects of neurotoxicity are full of technical voids, and that the related "endpoints" of central nervous system problems and immunodeficiency are not examined. Stick with the "kill 'em and count 'em" research strategy, like we do ... with cockroaches.

"But, the media is unrelenting, and because those in power must project societal fairness, Congress demands a Gulf War Registry. The grateful nation bows its thanks. However, in designing this registry, you survey only oil well fire smoke as a source of hazardous exposures, While your counterpart over at DoD manipulates statistics that show the smoke could not possibly make anybody sick. And You engender headlines that these petroleum products are blameless and could not have caused the widespread cardiopulmonary damage discovered by your own VA medical staff.

"Most importantly, you make sure the blood test you do will never disclose heavy metals from ballistics nor DU, depleted uranium oxidized particulates; never do controlled tests for the antibodies for benzine. When a lot of DU-exposed soldiers emerge, you maintain that they look OK on the outside and you make sure none are tested for chromosomal damage. My God, what would we do if their chromosomes showed abnormal. Biotechnology companies may be the darling of Wall Street, but if they show up here, they're shown to the door.

"You organize regional VA meetings and coach coordinators how to respond when pressed for environmental testing, and you pacify your own medical staff that the reasons testing should be limited are primarily budgetary. You organize policy meetings at individual VA hospital units to keep the environmental lid clamped tightly. We must be careful, and medical mutiny is kept outside the hospital fencerow.

"But, the national media are after you like wolves after meat, and so you create three "center of excellence," that is, centers to concentrate environmental and specialty reviews for all those with symptoms without a diagnosis. But, privately, instead of referring any of the thousands starting to show up. you tell the individual veteran that there "is no basis for referring, because we don't know it would be of any benefit."

"And those who somehow squeak through, are ordered to do work exposing them to powerful cleaners and distillate-based waxes, because, as the chiefs announce, "we don't believe in environmental illness, but if we did, we'd agree that environmental illness is what you appear to have. And if you need physical therapy, we have a strongly chlorinated whirlpool of bubbly chemicalness to finish off your day. How can we blame the medical chiefs for such transgressions, they are only familiar on how to block a diagnosis of environmental illness, they never use it.

CHEMICAL WARFARE IN THE GULF WAR

Although the US military is going to great pains to deny it, it appears that many US and allied troops were exposed to chemical warfare agents during the Persian Gulf war. A Czech anti-chemical warfare unit, attached to Saudi forces, reports that their instruments detected Sarin, a nerve agent, and veterans of a US Navy Reserve Seabee unit say that they were exposed to some kind of blistering agent. Such exposure could explain many of the medical problems reported by an estimated 5,000 Gulf War vets.

On June 27, 1993 the Birmingham News detailed accusations by members of the 24th Naval Reserve Construction Battalion out of Huntsville, Alabama that a "fine mist" descended on their base south of the Saudi port of Al Jubayl on Jan 20, 1991. They say that

WIZARD OF ID

they were awakened by a couple of loud explosions, which sent them into their gas masks and bunkers. When they emerged after the all clear was sounded, they ran into the mist.

PO First Class Roy Butler said, "All of my exposed skin was like it was on fire. I couldn't breathe." PO Second Class Mike Haynes said, "I got hit in the face with it. My lips were numb, like I had been to the dentist with Novocaine, for about seven days. In fact, I still have a touch of it in the center of both lips."

Chief Petty Officer Larry Perry, of Gold Hill N.C., was the first vet to contact the newspaper about this. He said he had to do something since so many of his comrades were getting discharged for medical reasons but no disability pay or medical care. He gave them the names of ten fellow vets, who confirmed his report. The paper then went on to interview DOD officials before publishing the story.

The sailors are unsure about the origins of the mist but they say that earlier that night they were on alert for an attack by Iraqi Scud missiles and also that same night a British Tornado and Iraqi Mig engaged in aerial combat over the base. Two different radiomen listened while the command confirmed a gas attack and later "unconfirmed" it.

The detachment commanding officer says that he was told that the chemical warfare alert was the result of a false alarm caused by diesel fumes. He says he was also told that the explosions were caused by jets breaking the sound barrier, not bombs. A Navy spokesman said "I've never seen anything that indicates that anything was ever used." That may mean that although chemical weapons weren't "used," their contents might have been "released." It may also mean that the spokesperson wasn't told anything so he could plead ignorance.

The CO went on to say, with typical military logic, that he was skeptical about the Seabees' story because they all agreed on the main points. He also thinks that this could be the product of "medical desperation," saying "People with AIDS have the same kind of desperation. That doesn't mean that there's a cure an answer or even a reason."

The information from the Czech soldiers first appeared in a July 2 interview in the largest Czech daily, Mlada Fronta Dnes. On July 29 the Reuter wire service carried the story. They quoted Czech government officials who confirmed the reports, without specifying the date or location of the exposure. They also confirmed that at least ten Czech veterans were suffering from "Gulf War Syndrome." The commander of the affected unit said that the Sarin was probably released when the allies bombed a nearby Iraqi chemical weapons arsenal.

These reports prompted a July 29, 1993 letter from Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama to Sec. of Defense Les Aspin which opens with: "Recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Force Requirements and Personnel by veterans of the war in the Persian Gulf has left me deeply concerned that US troops may have been exposed to chemical warfare agents."

From all of this, it appears that the US government has known about these exposures since the Gulf War. Their failure to admit this at that time may be because the nerve gas was released by their own bombing. Or perhaps they thought that public outrage at the mere idea of chemical warfare would force them to escalate the war. Admitting it now would damage a reputation already tarnished by Tailhook and myriad procurement scandals.

The neurological and respiratory symptoms reported by Gulf War vets for the past two years are obviously related to these various exposures. That means that US officials have been knowingly withholding information which could have saved the lives and health of thousands of vets. The future of these vets will depend upon how good a job the past veteran-victims do of educating the public and gaining their vocal support.

BEWARE OF "VVAW AI"

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individuals calling themselves the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist". Their activities are centered mainly in Seattle, San Francisco and New York City. They often claim to be part of our organization and their most recent antics include burning American flags at demonstrations.

"VVAW AI" is not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW. They are not affiliated with us in any way. "VVAW AI" is actually the creation of an obscure, ultra-left sect called the Revolutionary Communist Party and is designed to pimp off of VVAW's history of struggle and continued activusm. Their objective is to create confusion and deception in order to promote themselves.

We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit. Don't be fooled, they are not what they claim. Forewarned is forearmed.

Vietnam Vet Visits School

by Linda Breanux, Erin Clasen and Hollie Kelly

Recently classes in the Alternative School have been studying about war and the effect that it has on people's lives. We have been especially concentrating on the Vietnam War. In English classes we are currently reading *Born on the Fourth of July*, by Ron Kovic. Kovic is a Vietnam veteran who was shot and is now paralyzed from the waist down. Kovic devoted much of his life to protesting against the war in an organization called Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).

Bill Branson, Chicago VVAW, talking with student at Ken State. VVAW has a vision of war different from that usually heard. Photo by Dan Steiger.

Veteran Dave Cline Visits A-School

In our Social Studies classes, we have also been studying about Vietnam, as well as learning about current situations in Somalia and Haiti. As a follow-up to all this, we had a Vietnam veteran by the name of Mr. Dave Cline (who is a member of VVAW) visit the A-School to discuss his experiences in Vietnam. Mr. Cline is very dedicated to his cause, and has spoken to large audiences across the country. He spoke of his opinions toward War and answered some of our questions about Vietnam. Overall, we had a very interesting discussion and we appreciated that he took the time to come and speak with us. Here are some of our reactions to his visit.

Danielle Leamy . . . I think Mr. Cline gave us a better outlook on how it really was in Vietnam, and what the vets really like for the soldiers, and how some movies like *Platoon* can glorify things at times. I think I understand more about what happened and I felt horrible that our soldiers had to go there and live the way they did. I also think that most wars are not necessary and everyone has to work more to try and get along. There are much better way to handle things and our government needs to realize that and stop sending young people to foreign countries to die.

Michelle Gatto . . . I was very interested in what Dave Cline had to say about the Vietnam War. He told us his feelings about the War and how he was wounded over there. I think that he and the other soldiers must have been very brave because some of them, like Dave, were only 19 when they went to War. I don't know if I could talk about a war like that if I were in one; it would probably be too painful and I would try to block it out of my mind. I don't think there should be any more wars; we have to try to get along.

Joe Pentaleri . . . I had very little reaction to most of what Dave Cline said. Of course, I respect him, and a lot of things he said were true. Although he also said a lot of things I didn't relate to and that I disagreed with. I am sure most people who volunteer feel differently than people who were drafted.

Tommy Davis . . . Vietnam Veteran Dave Cline visited our class on October 21, 1993. He was a very interesting speakers and he helped me to understand what kind of things happened during the Vietnam War. Also it was interesting to hear what type of emotions he experienced when he was wounded by a gunshot. Also, it seemed that he was very concerned with why the government sends people to war, when sometimes it's not worth it. He thought the government was just using soldiers as bait, which is why he joined VVAW when he returned from the war. I guess I would say thank you to him for helping me understand more about Vietnam and getting to meet a veteran.

From Our way . . . an Alternative School Publication (Westbury, NY), November 1, 1993. Reprinted with permission.

LOIS RAIMONDO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

William Willert (center), president of Willert Home Products, talks with Vietnamese workers at his trade fair display booth in Hanoi last week.

Vet Returns to 'Nam On a Hire Mission

By Bruce Stanley
Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam—Bill Willert takes pride in his service as a gunner's mate on a U.S. Navy destroyer that shelled communist targets during the Vietnam War.

Now a successful manufacturer, Willert has returned to Vietnam to build a factory and create jobs for up to 500 Vietnamese.

"They deserve it," he says.

Willert, 47, is president of Willert Home Products, a family-run firm that makes mothballs, toilet bowl deodorizers and potpourri. He spoke from his booth at Vietnam's first trade fair for U.S. companies, which ended Sunday.

"As corny as it sounds, I want to create jobs in Vietnam, without taking jobs away from my current U.S. work force," he said.

Willert first came to Vietnam in 1968 as a gung-ho volunteer aboard the USS Stoddard. He commanded a gun crew that fired daily salvos at communist forces near the central Vietnamese city of Da Nang.

"I knew who was on the receiving end of the shells," he says with passion. "They were people trying to do harm to U.S. troops."

Nevertheless, he now calls the Vietnam War unjust and says the mistakes are continuing today.

President Clinton lifted the 19-year U.S. economic embargo against Vietnam in February, but he still has not established full diplomatic relations with the country or granted it most-favored-nation trading status.

"Because the U.S. lost the war . . . many Americans don't like Vietnam," he says. "Conversely, we won the war with Japan and Germany, and we are very good trading partners with both of these countries."

Willert hopes to do something about that. His plans include finding a local partner to help him grow flowers for potpourri and make incense sticks, plastic fly swatters, flypaper strips and mop handles.

None of these projects, with a total estimated start-up cost of $300,000, would cost American jobs, he stresses.

Willert first employed Vietnamese who came to the United States as refugees in 1985. Today, they make up about 20 percent of the 350 workers at his main plant in St. Louis.

Willert, a college dropout whose firm generates revenues of $50 million, says he is not a typical businessman.

"The concept of increasing the size of my company for dollars or profit is not my No. 1 thing," he says. "I'd rather provide jobs for more families in St. Louis, New Jersey, Los Angeles, or West Virginia—and Vietnam."

Letters written to Barry Romo from Chicago Students

Mr. Romo,

Thanks for coming and telling our class your experiences with the war. I found them very interesting. I was thinking of joining the Marines but after you said *Full Metal Jacket* was a realistic view of boot camp I rented it to see it and it scared my to think how demoralizing it was to be there and listen to what they said. Now I'm giving college a chance.

Brian

Mr. Romo,

Thank you very much for coming to our classroom and sharing your thoughts and views, and understanding of the Vietnam War. It's always enjoyable to have a speakers whose views that were very well liked. Maybe to other people your not but what we felt from speech was amazing.

Thank you again,
Kathy

Dear Mr. Romo,

I enjoyed your presentation. You cleared up some things that I was unclear about, and told the truth about what happen in Vietnam.

Sincerly,
Yumni J.

Dear Mr Romo

I like your presentation. I learned alot about the Vietnam. And you told the truth about the Vietnam. I thank you for coming in our classroom.

Sincerely,
Manuel

Dear Mr. Ramo:

You're speech was very stimulating. I never knew that the U.S. could be so cruel. But I believe that the war was wrong just as you do. In the movies they show the war so easy, well they are wrong.

Sincerely,
Tina

New Species of Deer Discovered in Vietnam

By Nick Ludington
Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Scientists have found a new mammal species—the Giant Muntjac deer—in an area they call a "lost world" in Vietnam, the World Wildlife Fund reported Thursday.

The discovery was made by Vietnamese and fund scientists in northern Vietnam's Vu Quang Nature Reserve where another new mammal species, the Vu Quang ox, was discovered in 1992.

It escaped the bombing and military pesticides such as Agent Orange, which devastated much of Vietnam's countryside during the Vietnam War.

Scientists working in the area also have found evidence of a new species of fish, two previously unknown bird species and an unknown tortoise with a striking yellow shell.

Vu Quang was described by British scientist John Mackinnon as "a lost world."

Vets Stand Down

Homeless in Chicago

Barry Romo
National Coordinator

Chicago VVAW worked three full days running the kitchen, washing the floor, cleaning the stove and dishes. It wouldn't have happened without the leadership of Bill Branson and Mike Terry, and the constant work of Joel Greenburg and Annie Luginbil and a cast of 30 other VVAW members. 600 vets registered, 800 homeless were fed.

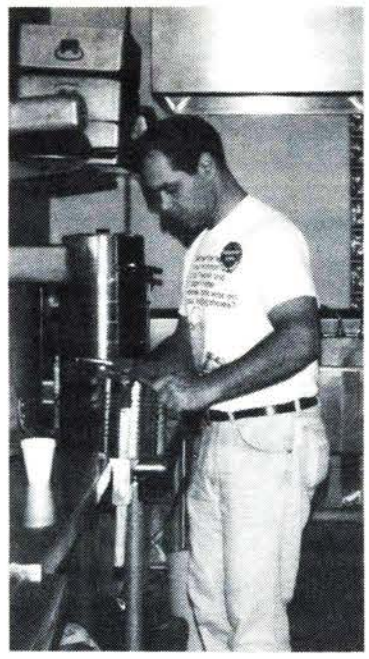
We worked with other vets groups like Viet Now, and VVA, along with VA employees who put homeless vets needs first.

VA staffers such as Phil and Gail showed us all what professionalism and heart can accomplish in coordinating services, volunteers and homeless. They put in triple shifts and are a real example of what the VA can accomplish. VVAW presented each with a special gift from Vietnam to show our appreciation.

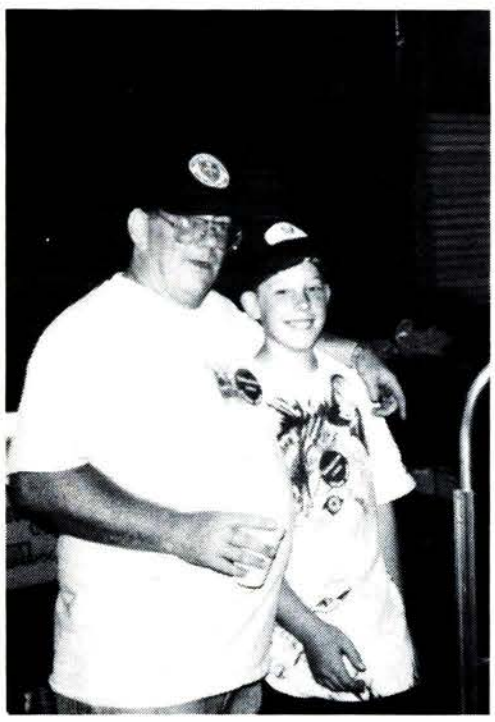
VVAW is known for standing up to bureaucrats and has taken over more than a few VA administrator offices in our time. But the VA, different vets groups and the homeless people enjoyed each other's company and comradeship.

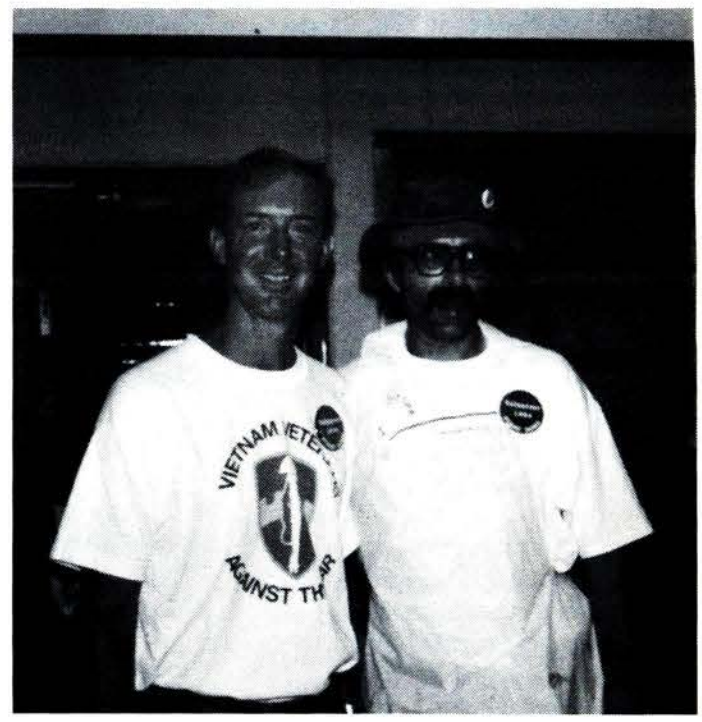
Of course a low point was when the suits showed up—expensive VA honcho bureaucrats who had to have their photo op. (No, they did not visit the kitchen.)

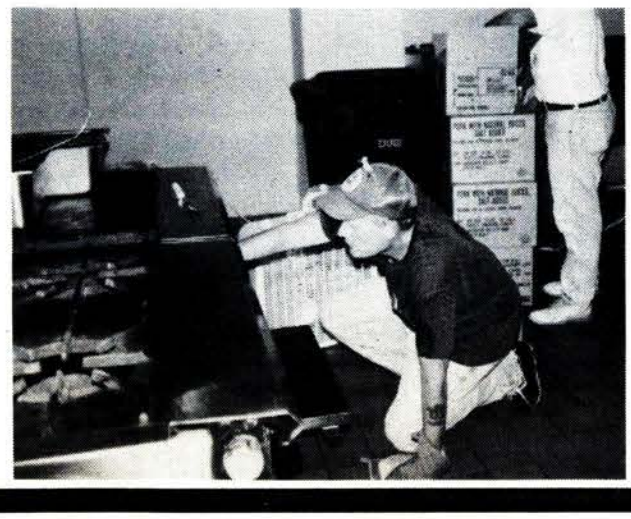
All photos on this page by Jessi Alynne Romo.

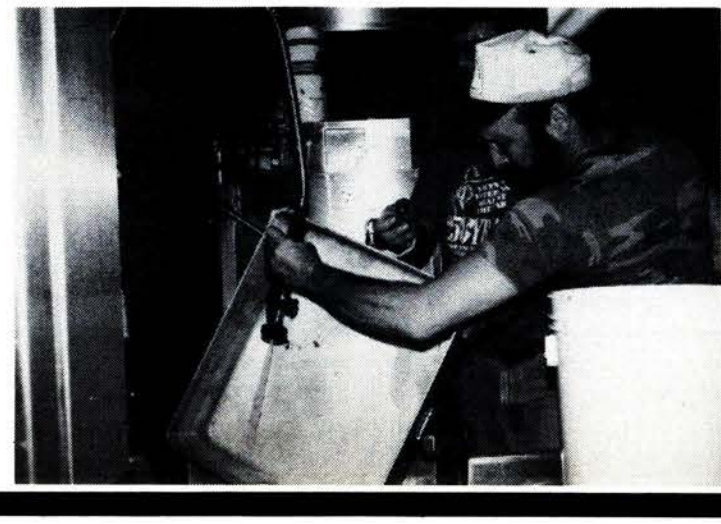


Serving the homeless at the Chicago Vets Standown









REAL WAR STORIES FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

An Interview with Greg Payton

VVAW member Greg Payton toured parts of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia during late September and early Octover 1992. His tour was coordinated by War Resisters' International and peace activists and groups in the region. The purpose of his trip was to meet with conscripts and volunteers in the armies of the former Yugoslavia who are now returning to their homes, demobilized, injured, and traumatized. Greg is active in VVAW and knowledgeable about post-traumatic stress. Greg talked with WRL staff members Dorie Wilsnack and Ruth Benn in October 1992.

What did it feel like to be in Serbia?

Greg: After a six-hopur train ride from Vienna, I arrived in Belgrade, Serbia. There is no fighting in that region but a lot of tension. I was surprised that I didn't see many Serbian soldiers on the street.

Everybody knows the war is happening, but the Serbians are in denial. Most people try to act like they are separate and apart from the war. The attitude is "It's not me, it's them. There's nothing I can do. I don't know why the're putting sanctions on me. Why do I have to suffer like this?"

I talked to some young people and they just don't know what is going to happen with their lives. One young woman wanted to be a research chemist, but she feels medicine is safer because of the uncertain future. She's angry about all these things happening now and she can't make a decision.

I went to a disco and this guy came over and sat down and told me he was a veteran. He said he can't understand the war. He was in a lot of pain because he was cut off from family and friends in Zagreb. He doesn't understand why they are fighting.

What is the effect of the sanctions?

The U.N. sanctions agains Serbia began in May and were beginning to have an effect when I was there. Lives are disrupted because of things like there is no gas left or it costs $10 a gallon. People who normally have freedom to travel and use their cars wait for the trolleys. There are lines for certain foods like milk and other goods and prices have gone up. Money is being controlled on the black market and salaries are cut. My host's father was making about 1200 marks a month. Now he is making 150.

Many Serbians wanted me to influence my government to lift the sanctions. They thought I should go back and say the U.S. should at least provide humanitarian aid. My response to them was to ask what they were doing to petition their government to stop the war. Then they were silent. Nobody ever answered that question.

What peace activities did you participate in, while in Serbia?

I went on major television and radio shows in Belgrade. I was interviewed by the newspaper for the weekend section. The peace activists had very good media contacts.

The Anti-War Center organized a forum at a student cultural center. The dialogue was good. The turn-out was poor and there were other problems. The relationship between peace groups and veterans is nothing like in the U.S. The forum organizers went out of their way to get a veteran who they thought would be appropriate, but when this veteran, Stevo Kovacevic, had a chance to speak, he grabbed the microphone and said, "I would go back to the front tomorrow. With my one leg I'd go back. We can't allow them to kill us. The Muslims might have a jihad." I'm used to opposing viewpoints, but he created a very emotional situation and really dominated the forum.

What else is the peace movement doing?

In Belgrade, they hold forums, contact the media, and produce literature, but they didn't seem to have a handle on how to rally the people or how to follow through on some basic organizing techniques. One of the sugggestions I made to them was that from now until the end of the war they should have something going on every week. They should keep their literature in the streets where people can begin to identify with them. Many people in Serbia weren't even aware there is a Serbian peace movement.

In Pancevo, just outside of Belgrade, I spoke at a forum and a good crowd listened for three hours, asking lots of questions. It's a small town and has a close-knit group of anti-war activists.

In Bosnia, I had dinner with WRI activist Marko Hren and his two roommates. All three of them had different opinions about the war--nobody could agree about anything. These are people who live together, have a political consciousness, and are in the peace movement, but they all have different ideas. One thought the U.S. should intervene; she saw this as the only way to end the fighting. These differences have an effect on organizing.

What kind of treatment is there for war-related stress among veterans?

I went to Novi Sad in northern Serbia where I spoke at a forum with other veterans including a strong Serbian veteran, Sava Slojsin. He focussed on the problems of veterans and how the government wasn't doing the proper thing for Serbvian veterans.

I visited a new post-traumatic stress clinic at the University of Novi Sad and we had a discussion with the clients there. During the discussion one of the men stopped me and said, "Listen, I'm still on active duty, I'm not a veteran." That was a problem with the kind of things I talk about: They are still at war, and it's very difficult to realize you'll have to mobilize to take care of stress problems. People can't even think about the war ending because the objective is so unclear.

You went to Croatia. What were your impressions of that trip?

To get to Zagreb you have to take a ten-hour bus ride from Subotica through Hungary and back into Croatia. You have to change buses after you cross the Hungarian border because the Serbian bus can't go to Zagreb. While we waited, two buses full of refugees pulled up. You could see the pain on their faces, but also the relief when they got off the bus. There were kids on the bus but no playing and no laughter.

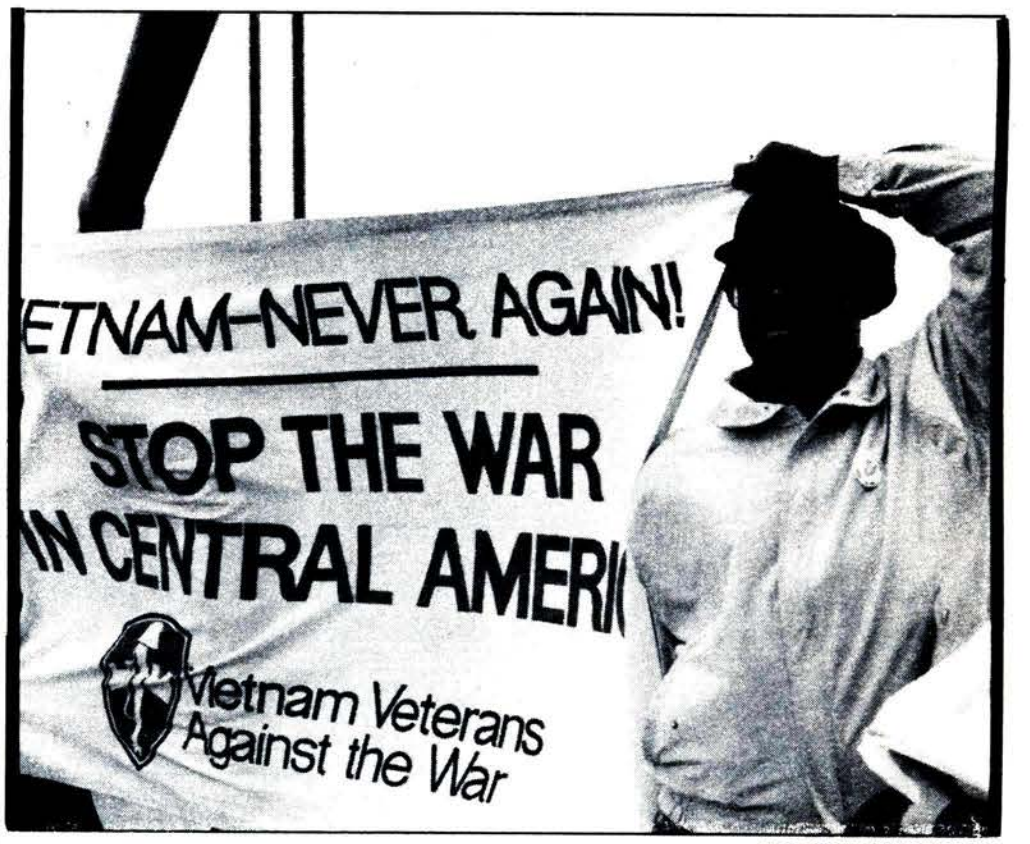


PHOTO BY LAURIE SANDOW

When I arrived in Zagreb there was no one to meet me, and I got stuck all night in the bus station. I sat in the post office with two veterans and a guy who worked at the post office. One veteran was about 24 years old, and he talked about the atrocities—babies being slit in half—and other things he had seen and done. He couldn't find work, couldn't travel, couldn't do anything. At 24 years old he felt he didn't have anything else to live for.

I learned a powerful lesson that night. The postal clerk had helped me and he wanted to exchange numbers because he might come to New York. So I got out my notebook and opened it to a page for him to write on. He said, "Oh no, I will not put my name on the page with him. He is my enemy and I will not do it." There was a Serbian's name on that page. The Serbians are in denial, but the Croatians are clear: "Kill Serbians."

What did you learn about military deserters or resisters?

Before returning home, I went to Vienna, Austria, to a big meeting with deserters from Bosnia, refugees, and reporters. One deserter on the panel started talking about his experiences and began to have flashbacks while he was talking. I had to talk him out of it because no one else knew what to do. He started talking about the atrocities he had seen. It was ironic that this happened during this program.

The peace movement in Austria has a support network for deserters, and many live there. There are about 60,000 known deserters, but neighboring countries have closed their borders to more deserters and refugees. They can't find work or get papers, and people in those countries are reluctant to support them because of job competition.

More personally, on my flight from Austria I started talking to the man next to me. It turned out he was a deserter on his way to Australia. He had been in the army and did't want to go back. Here was a young man 23 years old, uprooting his whole life, embarrassed to be fleeing the war. His girlfriend and mother are in Serbia, all his teenage recollections are in Serbia, and he's going to a completely new world and has no idea what to expect. He was really scared about what he was doing.

Did you speak with any women veterans or get a sense of women's reactions to the war?

There are women in the military, but none of them came forward to talk as veterans. Most of the women I talked to are opposed to the war, both in Serbia and Croatia, but the bottom line is that they are very afraid to say anything because they don't want people to think they're not supporting their men. Also the men don't seem to be open to women's opinions. The women are very frustrated because they don't have any voice.

Just to close up, did you come away with any particular things to do or ways that you see that vets here can be helpful?

I'm already in the process of talking to other veterans and sharing information about things that are taking place. Not only stuff about post-traumatic stress, but just daily organizational stuff. I'll be getting in touch with other veterans groups too like Disabled Vets of America.

I think the only thing that can happen is for the Serbians to have daily rallies to stop this war. People are afraid to say that they are opposed to the war because they are afraid they'll be ostracized from their community. The peace movement in Serbia needs to just keep hammering away at the conscience of the people.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Where We Came From Who We Are, Who Can Join

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice to the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still raging war in Indochina, and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States as well as active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW quickly took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we started the first rap groups to deal with traumatic after effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counselling at Vet Centers now. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

Today our government is still financing and arming undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world. Recently American troops have been sent into combat in the Middle East and Central America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to South East Asia. Meanwhile many veterans are still denied justice-facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post traumatic stress disorder and other health problems while already inadequate services are being cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent another generation from being put through a similar tragedy and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. JOIN US!

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INSIGNIA

U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV) [official design by the Institute of Heraldry, U.S. Army]. Under this insignia 60,000 Americans and 2 million Vietnamese died.

"Yellow and red are the Vietnam colors. The red Ground alludes to the infiltration and aggression from beyond the embattled yellow "wall", (i.e. The Great Wall of China). The opening in the wall through which this infiltration and aggression flow is blocked by the white sword representing United States military aid and support. The wall is arched and the sword pointed upward in reference to the offensive action pushing the aggression back."

It was first issued to the 12,000 "advisors" in Vietnam in March of 1963

INSIGNIA OF VIETNAM VETS AGAINST THE WAR

We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the wall with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of Soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of U.S. aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. As with all the propaganda put out by the government to justify U.S. intervention in Indochina, the MACV insignia also put forward lies. The U.S. military was not protecting the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China, but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself and for our exploitation.
Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families.
Our insignia is 20 years old. It belongs to VVAW and no other organization or group may use for any reason without permission.

Fighting for Veterans, Peace & Justice since 1967
National Office
P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

Membership Form

Vietnam Veterans Against the War,Inc.
National Office
P.O. Box 408594, Chicago, Il. 60640

Membership Application

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Dates of Service (if applicable) _____
Branch _____
Unit _____
Overseas Duty _____
Dates _____
Military Occupation _____
Rank _____

Membership in VVAW is open to all people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice. Most of our members are veterans of Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The initiation fee is $20.00, sent to the National Office (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local programs and projects under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to annual national meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for the day to day organizational leadership of VVAW and issuing national publications.

Signature _____
Date _____

(Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax deductible)

Join with VVAW

Point Man of the Vets Movement

VVAW Re-Up

Since 1967 VVAW has led veterans in the fight for peace and justice. We stood up to reveal the nature of U.S. crimes against the people of Vietnam. We held rap groups for veterans with post traumatic stress disorders 10 years before the VA started the same program. We were in the forefront of fighting to get benefits for victims of Agent Orange, a fight which continues today.

VVAW has been out in front when it counted. We catalogued the lies of the U.S. government in Vietnam--when the government said no U.S. troops had been in Cambodia, we had troop who had been there. When the Black population of Cairo, IL, were under siege by racists, we used our military experience to convoy food and clothing; ex-medics from VVAW used their military experience to start a clinic in rural Alabama. Again and again VVAW did things that others would not do, took up causes that others would not advocate.

In our almost quarter of a century, VVAW has seen members come and go--and many times come back again. Today there are many avenues for a vet who wants to see positive change in our neighborhoods, cities, country or world. In the late '60's, a Vietnam veteran who wanted change--who was an activist--joined VVAW.

We're asking VVAW members and supporters and friends to join us once again. The membership form is here in THE VETERAN; fill it out, please, and send it to us. Even if you've joined before, even if you've been an active member for years, let us know you're still there and still a member. We're creating new mem-bership cards--we'll send them out when we get the forms in.

VVAW has been able to do what we have done, to enjoy the reputation we have today, because of our members--because of you. We hope to hear from you once you get this issue of THE VETERAN: VVAW wants you: now!

Vietnam Veterans Tell Their Story
RECOLLECTIONS

A Forgotten Anniversary?

Joe Miller
National Staff

During this summer of anniversaries, from D-Day, to the walk on the moon, to Woodstock, I am afraid we might miss another extremely important anniversary. This anniversary is important to me, as it should be to all veterans of the Vietnam War, including the families of those who lost loved ones there and the millions of people here at home who fought so hard to end the war before even more were killed.

Thirty years later, the question still arises in those quiet moments: How may might I have saved? When thinking about the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, I sometimes wonder who among those nearly sixty thousand might have turned around and refused to go off to war if he or she knew the truth (or untruth) of the war's origins, as I did.

Then I remind myself that this story, or its main outlines, was part of the public record since early 1968, when Senator Fulbright held hearings of the Gulf of Tonkin "incident." Perhaps by then it was too late, though. Our "national honor" was at stake. Our "boys" in the field had to be supported blindly (and replaced with fresh faces and whole bodies). And so, by 1971, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution would die a quiet death, unlike those who were sent off to war after its 1964 passage. Yes, the war would go on, bringing death and destruction to thousands more Americans and millions of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. The inertia of commitment to those who had already fallen took over, sending blood and flesh after blood and flesh, until we just got tired of it all.

How may might I have saved? Do I have a chance to redeem my earlier silence and lack of personal courage? Will I live up to the commitment to save my son and the sons and daughters of fellow veterans, not to mention the parents and children of any future "enemy?"

Since the end of the Vietnam War, many have attempted to regain that oil post-World War II sense of national omnipotence and righteousness. That war has been redefined under a barrage of trance-inducing book and articles written by self-serving journalists, scholars, politicians, and novelists. Young people are being told fairy tales by Mother Goose wrapped in the flag. In this magical transformation, outright lies by public servants, from the President on down, are now excused due to their 'high moral purpose.' Policies which resulted in grotesque levels of death, maiming, and general destruction are now again put forward as 'necessary' for the attainment and maintenance of 'peace.' This is directly from the Orwellian script: war is peace. . . freedom is slavery . . . ignorance is strength.

Well, I would like to remind people of the facts behind the escalation of the Vietnam War. The real story is about lies, lies which drew many of us into an orgy of death, destruction, and dislocation for more than 10 years. The residue of that period is still with us, and no number of memorials or parades will ever really wash it away. We must remember this anniversary and not allow the manipulators to cover it over.

Thirty years ago, during August 2-5, 1964, a series of events took place that became known as the Gulf of Tonkin "incidents." The official story told to the American people then claimed that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had engaged in an "unprovoked" attack on the destroyer, USS Maddox, on the afternoon of August 2, 1964. Supposedly, the Maddox was sailing along in international waters, just minding its own business when attacked. This was the first lie.

The Maddox was on an intelligence mission, a Desoto patrol, which had as its objective the provocation of shore station communications on the northern coast of Vietnam, as well as those on the Chinese island of Hainan. The collection of communications signals from these areas were meant to aid in the efforts to break Vietnamese and Chinese codes, a task of the U.S. Naval Security Group working under that national Security Agency (NSA). The temporary intelligence team on board the Maddox for this mission included Vietnamese and Chinese linguists, a couple of whom worked with me at the naval Security Group Detachment on the island of Taiwan. On these patrols it was often necessary to turn the ship landward, enter the target nation's territorial waters, and then begin recording the verbal excitement. This time, however, the response was more intense than anticipated, and the North Vietnamese sent boats to repel the invading American warship. The Maddox sent out a call for help, and fighters from my ship, the USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14), were sent to save the day, in the best John Wayne tradition.

Two days later, our ship received another call for help, this time from the Maddox and another destroyer, the USS Turner Joy. They claimed they were under attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats again. This "attack" was taking place late at night, during heavy seas. There were no definite sightings of "enemy" boats. In fact, one of the first U.S. pilots on the scene, Commander James Stockdale from our ship, claimed there was no attack. This was ignored. It was enough for the Johnson-McNamara team in Washington to claim that an attack had indeed taken place. This was just what they had been looking for to justify increased American involvement in Vietnam. This was the second lie.

These two lies were the basis for upping the ante in Vietnam. First, on August 5, 1964, U.S. air attacks were made against military installations in northern Vietnam. These were called "reprisals" for the "unprovoked attacks" against our ships in "international waters." Lies, lies, and more lies. Then, on August 7, the U.S. Senate (with only two dissenting votes) adopted the "Tonkin Gulf Resolution," which would function for the nest six years as a blank check that allowed the Johnson Administration to increase the level of direct U.S. involvement in a combat role. Then the Nixon Administration arrived on the scene, and the damage had already been done. No one wanted to hear that U.S. troops might have died in vain, died for a series of lies. Nixon even bragged that he did not need the Tonkin Gulf Resolution to support what he was doing in Indochina. The dynamic of warmaking had taken over, and other lies were used to continue the war until 1975.

For me, this anniversary brings pain at the thought of so many who died in a war against the Vietnamese people's struggle for national unity and independence. All the result of cold warrior's lies. This pain is especially acute, since i was one of those who knew the truth of the Tonkin Desoto patrols, having served in the naval Security Group between 1961 and 1964. Some of the intelligence personnel on the Maddox were workmates of mine when I worked at the Naval Security Group Detachment at Linkou Air station on Taiwan. After the so-called "incidents," I talked with one of them and was not horrified then. After all, I was still part of the intelligence "club" who felt more important because we knew what other did not. Unfortunately, this sort of silliness still attracts young people into the lying business.

My personal horror grew as questions drove me to learn more about Vietnam, as the numbers of dead Vietnamese, Americans, and others piled up day by day and week by week. How many might have been saved if people like me spoke out much earlier? How many names on that black wall in Washington might not be there if the truth were told sooner? The wall itself might never have happened!

So, we should always remember how easy it was for the government to manufacture its own "facts" to support a desired policy. How easily we all accepted the lies, even those of us who knew they were lies! We should certainly remember all those who died or suffered serious injury while fight in the war, or fighting against it.

While many may prefer the euphoric memories of Woodstock, these should be balanced by the memory of murdered civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner, as well as the memory of the Tonkin Gulf, August 1964.

D-Day "Reenactment"

Ellie Shunas,
Chicago Chapter

On Saturday, 4 May, a mock D-Day invasion was staged on Montrose Beach (along Lake Michigan) in Chicago. This reenactment was a disgrace and an insult to the vets who participated in the real thing.

The invasion of Normandy in 1944 was planned by the brass and carried out by the soldiers from Fance, Great Britain, Canada, the U.S. and a small number from various occupied countries in Europe. About 19,000 soldiers lot their lives on or near the beaches where the landing took place. Today, their grave markers make an eerie ocean of white on the green meadows of the D-Day memorial site in France.

Veterans whom I have heard interviewed on recent television specials tell their experiences of bravery, horror and death on the beaches codenamed Omaha and Utah. Some were landed in 12 feet of water and forced to ditch all their weapons and equipment to avoid drowning. many swam to shore through a sea of corpses and body parts. The fought their way up the beaches inch by inch just trying to stay alive. All the time there was the deafening pounding of the weapons fire and the yelling of the troops. Then there wre the African-American soldiers many of whose job it was to gather up the dead, whole or in pieces, for identification if possible. And the women nurses, following shortly behind the invasion, patched together the wounded.

The reenactment allows some macho war fans to have an outing in the park, to strut their stuff, risk-free, in front of the television cameras.

The reinactment sanitized the battle. It allowed us to engage in thekind of sentimental nostalgia that casts a rosy veil over the past and makes it cozy and safe. It trivialized the sacrifices made by the vets and their importance to our nation's history.

A more fitting memorial would have been to remember D-Day with a parade. Similar to the Welcome Home parade for Vietnam veterans, it would honor the vets, alive and dead, and the sacrifices they made. Fifty years is a long time byt vets still vividly remember. All of us should learn to see this historic event as clearly as they do.